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"Berardi!, Whiskey Tango Foxtrot!?" A Standard Operating Procedure For Making A High Performing BLT

Chris Berardi

University of Pennsylvania, cberardi82@gmail.com

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Submitted to the Program of Organizational Dynamics, College of Liberal and Professional Studies in the School of Arts and Sciences in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Masters of Science in Organizational Dynamics at the University of Pennsylvania
Advisor: Janet Greco

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“Berardi!, Whiskey Tango Foxtrot!?” A Standard Operating Procedure For Making A High Performing BLT

Abstract

This Capstone examines high-performance leadership tendencies among former military leaders in culinary settings. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis supported a series of inductive suppositions. Section 2 of the Capstone combines experiential pre and post-military stories and six qualitative interviews with military leaders to pinpoint five leadership tendencies drawn from the literature. Section 3 details qualitative interviews with senior culinary leaders. The research identified the following five high-performance tendencies: (1) Indoctrination, (2) Sustained Standards of Excellence, (3) Competency, (4) Care for Others, and (5) Adaptability.

A short questionnaire helped newly appointed leaders self-assess their leadership approach to see if they implement any of the tendencies in their current environment. Employers could use a reformulation of the questionnaire as a tool to assess leadership tendencies of new employees.

Lastly, the research found that experience in one field is transferable to other fields, and provides an individual with specific models and lenses for viewing an organization.

Keywords

high-performance leadership tendencies, military leaders in culinary settings, leadership

Comments

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BLT

by

Chris Berardi

Submitted to the Program of Organizational Dynamics,
College of Liberal and Professional Studies
in the School of Arts and Sciences
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in Organizational Dynamics at the
University of Pennsylvania

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

2020

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BLT

Approved by:

Janet Greco, Ph.D., Advisor

John Eldred, M.S. Reader

ABSTRACT

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The “Elevated” Turkey BLT

It was day two. I had just finished orientation after joining a team of hard-nosed, old-school, French-trained Philly chefs at The Fountain Restaurant in Philadelphia. The kitchen was a massive, industrial steel monster where we worked in front of fire-breathing stoves topped with cast-iron French flat top cooking surfaces. There were sounds of knives chopping, sizzling food, steam, oven doors closing, plates being stacked, and the jingle of clean silverware being dumped for sorting and polishing. It reminded me of being in the galley of an aircraft carrier.

At the time, The Fountain was the only Five-Star Five-Diamond hotel restaurant on the East Coast. The handwritten tasting menus changed twice a week. If you were not listening to the chef’s prep instructions, you would (literally) be lost in the sauce. If you did not show up for work, you would not have a job at the end of the day. If you lack drive and perseverance, you won't last in this kitchen. Your work was often directly critiqued, and thick skin was a must. The leaders in this environment were not immune to spending time behind the hotline, and they built respect by working “in the trenches.” They were with us, shoulder to shoulder, demonstrating “la technique,” teaching their standard of excellence, keeping the momentum going, and sometimes barking orders like drill instructors. They had their way of doing things, passed down from a long lineage of French chefs.

I was given my first station, the “Pantry Cafe,” which served the Fountain Restaurant and the hotel’s more casual Swan Lounge and room service. Some of the dishes I prepared were fresh oysters, jumbo shrimp and lobster cocktail, salads, homemade charcuterie, cheese and fruit plates, and sandwiches. It was where all new cooks started and was considered a rite of passage into all other stations within the French brigade-style kitchen. After being tested at this station, a cook might be moved on to positions like Garde Manger (cold kitchen, salads, terrines, appetizers, cheeses), Entremétier (vegetables, starches, garnishes for the Saucier), Poissioner (fish), Saucier (meat and sauces). Some chefs waited years to advance to the position of Saucier. I was just beginning, a lowly Commis (prep cook).

One of my very first orders was a Turkey BLT Sandwich. I was equal parts unenthused and uncertain of what to do. I couldn’t remember the last time I stopped to make a BLT sandwich, and with turkey. It was simply out of routine for me. I thought to myself, “Forget it, and who cares anyway, it's a sandwich. I got this!” I went ahead and grabbed some sliced turkey, lettuce, sliced tomato, bacon and a couple slices of bread.

“STOP!” I heard from across the kitchen. Dave Jansen, the Executive Sous Chef, and 20-year veteran of the Fountain Restaurant, suddenly appeared in front of me, as if having teleported himself there, and looked me dead in the eye with a Dirty Harry level of intensity, “What the hell are you doing to that sandwich, and *what* exactly did that sandwich ever do to deserve this kind of treatment?” he said in a very intense, but comical manner. I’m certain I looked like a deer in headlights, I had no answer. I saw the other veteran cooks circling like sharks, smirking as they prepared to watch the instruction to begin.

I found myself with my hands behind my back, a lump in my throat, standing respectfully at the position of parade rest...wait, why was I at parade rest? Old Marine Corps habits die hard, if at all. Chef Jansen, with lightning speed, passed three pieces of whole-grain bread through the conveyor toaster. Waiting for the toast, he laid out two stacks of bibb lettuce, layered fresh sliced tomato atop, seasoned them gently with salt, pepper, and a touch of olive oil for sheen, then laid on the thick-cut, crispy bacon. He slathered mayonnaise on all three toasts and gently laid ribbons of fresh sliced turkey on two of the slices. He then neatly assembled the lettuce, tomato, and bacon stacks on top of the turkey and toast stacks. The two turkey stacks with toast were placed one atop the other, and the third and final slice of toast was used to top the masterpiece. It had to have been about ten inches high. Chef placed his hand neatly over the top and pushed downward to gently compress the sandwich. He added long toothpicks to the opposing corners, cut it down the center with a serrated knife, then turned the cut face out to expose the uniform layers of turkey, lettuce, tomato, bacon, mayonnaise, and bread. "That's a turkey BLT," he said, with a serious look from stern blue eyes.

What started as an uncomfortable lesson in better sandwich-making turned into a challenge that I looked forward to and began to take immense pride. After a while, some of the other cooks would stop by to try their hand at making their own Turkey BLT. We would stand back, arms crossed, and admire the sandwiches in all their glory, the same way one would admire art in a museum, before being whisked away to a hungry diner.

Even the simplest food can have an elevated standard. A certain message that was clear in that environment, whether we were making a Crème Brûlée or Turkey BLT: "*do everything your very best and do it right, no job is too small, your work is important.*" A

standard of excellence should trickle into every component of the work we do. In all of its simplicity, a good BLT remains my absolute favorite sandwich of all time and a great reminder of this leadership story.

Figure 1. A Turkey BLT



Background

I felt that for my Capstone, observing my past would make for an interesting beginning. I've been fortunate to work alongside leaders of highly effective teams ranging from the Marine Corps in Iraq to Michelin Star chefs in Spain. My time with former military leaders was spent on land, sea, and air, in forests, mountains, deserts, and swamps. I've lived and trained with those teams in the mud, rain, icy tundra, blistering sand, and blinding sun. I've lived in a combat zone, surrounded by demolished buildings, broken glass, sewage, blood, sweat, and toil.

The challenges we overcame during Operations Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan) and Iraqi Freedom molded us into who we are. Those experiences built our character and

created irreplaceable familial bonds. I stay close to those with whom I've served, and to this day when I see a veteran, I make it a point to say hello and respectfully thank him or her for their service. If I'm lucky, I may walk away with a story or two. I enjoy the privilege and honor of knowing someone simply through our shared background. After leaving the military, I pivoted into a completely different profession: cooking.

In 2005, I was fortunate to attend The Culinary Institute of America, in Hyde Park, NY, to pursue my Bachelor's Degree in Culinary Arts and Hospitality Management. Through intensive culinary training, I was propelled into the higher echelon of gastronomy. By graduation, I had the good fortune to be selected for a scholarship to work alongside award-winning Michelin Star chefs and their teams as an apprentice in Spain. My year-long experience was rich with culture, history, new friends, and a new language.

At that time, Spain was at the forefront of the molecular gastronomy movement. The culinary scene was experiencing somewhat of a renaissance. Michelin-quality food was enhanced with the use of hydrocolloids, distilled fragrances, and unconventional methods like dehydration and liquid nitrogen freezing. We distilled age-old flavors, but it was not uncommon to see novel food textures like jellies, foams, and vapors influencing presentation. I once turned a romesco sauce, typically a thick, orange emulsion, into a completely clear liquid, and it tasted *exactly* like romesco sauce. We even used a method called reverse spherification to turn some of those clear liquids into caviar. It was like a Willy Wonka Factory for Chefs. Both creativity and artistry were a must to remain competitive and relevant. Kitchen standards were extremely high, and nothing less than perfection was to be served.

After serving as a culinary apprentice in Spain, I returned to the US in 2010. Over the years, I advanced my leadership and management skills. I transitioned into more conventional hospitality leadership roles like Culinary Services Manager, Director of Culinary Standards and, more recently, Director of Operations in a hospitality technology company. Throughout my progression in the hospitality field, I've occasionally observed internal reverberations of my military experiences with culinary leaders, hence my sandwich story. My military past permeates my present.

More recently, I've gained critical insights through the Organizational Dynamics Program at University of Pennsylvania. By accessing new lenses, frameworks, and systems to view the world, I have become a more astute observer of organizational life, other humans, and my own experiences. My education at UPenn has prompted me to reassess my background and share my experience with others. During this rediscovery, I removed myself from the moment, flew above the action, and looked down with the metacognition of my world. In my suspension, I've looked back in time to understand what it is about my past that has impacted me. What is different about me? How can this experience be useful to others? I oscillate between leadership experiences with both the U.S. Marines and elite kitchens.

I realize that not everyone is as fortunate as I am to have slogged through Marine Boot Camp, Infantry School, and post-9/11 Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom to prepare themselves for challenging and unpredictable environments like kitchens. I've had the unique opportunity to observe leaders in kitchen environments, with a former Marine's mindset. I've realized that my experiences with military leaders have helped me construct a lens with which to view my post-military, culinary world.

Although the missions and risks in these worlds vary greatly, there are still striking similarities between the military and culinary operators and operations. With this understanding, I've set out to discover what high-performance leadership practices from one field may exist within the other. This capstone explores which high-performance leadership tendencies from my military experience, are emergent in culinary environments?

Approach

The basis for this paper is five core tactics or qualities I have observed in military leaders, which I have also experienced with culinary leaders:

- (1) Indoctrination: the practice of introducing an individual to a system of core values and beliefs,
- (2) Sustained Standards of Excellence: the ability to set and maintain the highest expectations of conduct and quality of work,
- (3) Competency: intentionally seeking individuals that have personal and technical competency, and a leader's intent to develop competencies,
- (4) Care for Others: having a genuine concern and for the well-being and safety of others,
- (5) Adaptability: the ability to adjust to challenges in an agile manner.

Throughout the paper, I will present stories from my past as colorful illustrations of each theme.

In Chapter 2, I explore each category in detail through a military lens. I support each tendency by incorporating data from qualitative interviews with leaders of high performing military teams and validating my findings with organizational leadership

literature on high-performance leadership. With those learnings, I will present a framework of tendency validations that I later compare with findings in Chapter 3:

Culinary Theme Discovery.

In Chapter 3, I isolate leadership tendencies from the military environment analogous to high performance within culinary environments. I validate those tendencies by conducting qualitative interviews with leaders of high performing hospitality teams and organizations. I also reference culinary literature to support my interviews and share what research may already exist with regard to high performance.

In Chapter 4, I connect the two worlds, military and culinary, in a way, I believe, may help the reader gain a better understanding of the similarities between leaders in both fields. My findings express the benefits for those that may be serving the military and culinary environments and beyond. I've also provided a useful framework for a newly appointed leader to self-assess their own leadership practices in alignment with the outlined tendencies. Another outcome is the reaffirmation for veterans and hiring managers alike the deeply ingrained skills veterans bring to the table.

CHAPTER 2

INDUCTIVE THEME IDENTIFICATION AND VALIDATION

In this chapter, I use my life experience as a way to explain relevant leadership themes. I then present findings from organizational leadership literature and interviews with selected military candidates to ground my suppositions.

Methodology

My interview method was consistent with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), as Beverly Hancock, Elizabeth Ockleford, and Kate Windridge (2001) explain:

IPA has two components. It is phenomenological, attempting to understand how participants make sense of their experiences (it does not assume that participants' accounts refer to some verifiable reality). Still, it recognises that this involves a process of interpretation by the researcher. It is an approach popular in psychology and in some areas of nursing. It looks at subjective states, so takes an insider perspective. It is interpretative – it recognises negotiation between researcher and researched to produce the account of the insider's perspective, so both researcher and researched are “present.” The data are accounts, which researchers then code for emergent themes, look for connections, and construct higher-order themes (p. 13).

The interview process naturally brought up more questions, and more exploration into what tendencies were more relevant to high performance in military environments. This helped me phase my research, identify gaps, and either add or eliminate dimensions before moving forward to the culinary section. All respondents were asked the same seven questions framed around their interpretation of high performing team leadership tendencies. I selected respondents using what is called critical case sampling.

“Researchers choose cases that they believe to be especially important because of the position they hold (e.g. because of their particular place within an organisation) or because

they are especially well able to articulate a view” (Hancock, B., Ockleford, E., & Windridge, K., 2001, p. 22).

Military Interview Structure

All five respondents were former military members, three of whom were former enlisted Marines who obtained the rank of Sergeant, and two were commissioned officers, a U.S. Marine Colonel and a U.S. Army Captain. The interviews were each approximately 45 minutes, conducted by either phone or video. The seven questions related to each respondent’s experiences as part of high performing teams (see Appendix A). Once collected, interview notes were classified by theme, and quotes are used to support the inductive reasoning from my personal accounts. The identified themes were supported by organizational leadership literature to generate hypothesis validity.

The initial goal pertaining to the question is to generate validity in themes that I induce from my own experiences, by backing them with IPA style interviews and organizational leadership literature. When it comes time to cross the bridge from the military into the culinary world, I will present a validated foundation to deductively analyze culinary leadership literature and interviews with high performing culinary leaders.

The following sections outline the themes that emerge from my own experience and appear in the voices of the military respondents. I then use with organizational leadership literature for each theme to provide support for the qualitative findings. The first of my suppositions is indoctrination, the initiation of an individual into set core values and beliefs.

Indoctrination

James Macgregor Burns (2012) stated, “The ultimate test of moral leadership is its capacity to transcend the claims of a multiplicity of everyday wants and needs and expectations, to respond to higher levels of moral development, and to relate leadership behavior, its roles, choices, style, commitments - to a set of reasoned, relatively explicit, conscious values” (p. 46).

Marines take pride in choosing to be indoctrinated into a system of such values that many others do not. They take the hard road. They are highly disciplined men and women, with an everlasting warrior spirit. They welcome challenges and persevere through pain. The internal spirit of the Marines is defined by its Corps Values: Honor, Courage, Commitment. Within these values lies a highly conscious order of thinking that transcends surface-level relations; it comprises an undying and relentless commitment to fellow Marine and the U.S. Constitution.

The Marines have a saying, *Semper Fidelis* (Always Faithful), to God, Country, and Corps. Many agree it is virtually impossible to truly understand the caliber of leadership the Marine Corps embodies unless one becomes a Marine. It’s a calling. The driving force behind the character of a Marine is instilled at the very beginning of training, and it never leaves. Once a Marine, always a Marine.

Not everyone makes their way in. For those who do, indoctrination begins immediately. Volunteers are only allowed to enlist if they meet the physical and mental requirements to attend Boot Camp. Once sworn in, they embark on their 13-week journey in either the muggy lowlands of Parris Island, SC or the hot and dry hills of San Diego, CA. Those who join are no longer civilians, they are recruits. The first thing a recruit will

do, like so many before, is standing on yellow footprints, feet at a 45-degree angle. With this initial step, the recruit becomes part of a system designed to optimize their mental and physical capabilities. In a few months, the recruits will officially be part of a fraternal/sororal organization of the highest order.

Recruits, because they are not officially Marines yet, must refer to themselves in the third person. There is no “I,” which represents singularity; instead, recruits are expected to speak in the third person. This process strips the old self of an ego-centric, individualistic mentality. A recruit now serves for the team, and puts the team above self.

The recruits meet their Senior Drill Instructor, a paternalistic and ruthless figure who begins the recruit experience by giving an intense speech about recruit expectations and Marine values. During the introduction, the Senior DI sets all training expectations and standards of conduct for recruits and drill instructors alike. Norms are presented. The concept of race does not exist anymore: everyone is green. Any kind of prejudice or harassment is condemned and met with force. Respect is mandatory. Orders and instructions are now bound by the Uniform Code of Military Justice, and they are not to be disobeyed, and. Any offense will result in brig time (the equivalent of jail time).

The Senior Drill Instructor is supported by his two or three Drill Instructors, otherwise known as “Heavies.” These are the most ferocious, relentless, and galvanizing individuals you will ever see walk upon this earth. Marine DIs represent the finest example of Marine Corps Leadership because they live out Marine Corps values to the highest degree. The Drill Instructors collectively use a mixture of instruction, intensity, volume, and attention to detail to instill discipline and a sense of urgency to challenge recruits and ultimately make Marines out of selected men and women.

Everything a recruit does in boot camp is for an assumed reason and goes without question. One of the many examples of this methodology is the usage of naval terminology. Marines are historically known as an amphibious assault element and must be prepared for potential tours of duty on a ship. The squad bay now becomes a static ship with a port side, starboard side, bow, aft, and quarterdeck. A door is no longer a door, it's a "hatch," a window is a "porthole," the floor is a "deck," and the wall is a "bulkhead."

Beyond naval terms, things like guns are now referred to as "weapons," a bed is a "rack," a pen is an "ink stick," and sneakers are called "go fasters." The list goes on. These new norms and nomenclature aid in the transformation of a recruit. There is a retirement of one's old self and rebirth of something new.

The Drill Instructors teach every recruit how to execute even minute, private tasks, such as exactly how to get dressed, how to lace and polish their boots, and how to make their bed to Marine specifications. They use countdowns, and if recruits move too slowly, they will repeat the task over and over again until the DI's are satisfied with their speed. If unsuccessful, the DIs can choose to make examples of recruits and make all pay for the mistake of one by using other disciplinary measures. I can't recall the number of hours I had to do push-ups because a recruit couldn't put his socks on fast enough, or make his rack properly. However, I can still visualize the grey concrete floor of the squad bay at 0530, watching it get closer and farther, as sweat dripped from my forehead into a puddle.

Discipline is a psychological tool DIs use to create organizational pressure and to teach consequences for failure to act. It also pisses recruits off and forces them to be accountable to each other. In combat, if you do not move quickly, you die. You must have a sense of urgency, and the Marine next to you needs to move his ass too. One

byproduct is a deeply felt sense of productivity. If not doing physical exercise, the recruit is studying. If not studying, they will be running close order drill movements, if not drill, cleaning and polishing weapons, the floor, the head (bathroom), brass fixtures, or something else.

Toward the end of boot camp, a three-day field exercise known as The Crucible is held. This is the culmination of thirteen weeks of training. Upon completion, it is the first time Drill Instructors become human, crack a smile, shake hands and congratulate the new Marines. The transformation is complete. The Eagle Globe and Anchor (EGA) Marines receive on that day is the official insignia of the Marine Corps, and symbolizes a naval force in readiness since 1775. Moreover, it signifies the final step of an individual's achievement of the honorable title.

Figure 2. The Eagle, Globe, and Anchor



Figure 3. Marines raising the flag on Mt. Suribachi, Iwo Jima, February 23, 1945



Note: <https://www.stripes.com/news/marine-corps/a-marine-captured-the-famous-iwo-jima-flag-raising-on-film-the-original-hasn-t-been-seen-in-75-years-1.619556>

Interview Support for Indoctrination

By definition, Indoctrination is “to instruct especially in fundamentals or rudiments” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). I’ve provided snapshots from respondent interviews that point to the role in which indoctrination plays in the Military:

When I look at the Marines, the reason why they are successful and high performing comes down to their norms and deeply held beliefs that started from the beginning in boot camp. They are ingrained, you learn the history of the organization. It builds a much stronger bond throughout the organization. Everyone is working toward a common goal. (Respondent 3)

The Marines can wipe out whatever is in front of them, and they know that. There are rich history and context that is provided for people in the organization for those that want to reach and become like other Marines, and stories of certain Marines. As a new Lance Corporal, you can follow that. I think that translates to the most successful organizations in the civilian world. Everybody understands the ethos and the beliefs of that company. In my current company, our saying is, “Enter to learn, and lead to serve.” (Respondent 3)

Supporting Literature on Indoctrination

John R. Katzenbach and Jason A. Santamaria (1999) conducted a three-year research project on behalf of McKinsey Company and the Conference Board. The team identified 50 companies with a reputation for engaging frontline workers. The list was later reduced to 30 companies, and, halfway through the research, the U.S. Marine Corps was added to the list of teams studied. Within three months and after 100 interviews, the research found that the Marines outperformed the other organizations concerning engaging the “hearts and minds” of their teams.

The U.S. Marines Corps is what the authors label an MVP- (Mission, Values, Pride) based organization. By enlisting, one commits him or herself to the Marine Corps Values, “Honor, Courage, Commitment.” The authors suggest that just by enlisting, one has already separated him or herself. Recruits are conveyed through a transformative process focused solely on the Marine Corps Values, while also living within the environmental controls in place during a 12-week boot camp, producing a self-sustaining belief in both the process and the results, thus completing the indoctrination process.

The recruits that remain are heavily entrenched in the mission, values, and purpose of the Marine Corps. Because of this dynamic, one of the very first practice recommendations by the authors for teams seeking to employ effective indoctrination techniques was to “over-invest at the outset in inculcating core values.” While indoctrination into organizations with expressed beliefs and values is helpful, there is also emphasis placed on adherence to those values and standards throughout an organization or within a team.

Sustained Standards of Excellence

It was a sunny afternoon in mid-March. We had been re-deployed to Jacksonville, NC, to the massive Marine base Camp Lejeune. We were just finishing two months of leave from our last tour of duty as a stateside QRF (quick reaction force) during the Operation Enduring Freedom conflict in Afghanistan. Our new orders were to deploy to Nasiriyah, Iraq, as a relief in place component of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force made the push to Baghdad. Our “workup” consisted of MOUNT training (Military Operations on Urban Terrain). The brief training was reminiscent of what Marines may have done to prepare for the Battle of Hue City during the Vietnam War. We raided small houses and employed key phrases in Arabic while practicing enemy detainment exercises. We sat in on briefings about chemical and biological weapons, chem suits, gas masks, rules of engagement, and cultural information pertaining to our AO (Area of Operations).

In between training sessions, we exercised and took chow hall (food) breaks. One of those afternoons, about a week before deployment, I found myself briskly walking back from lunch to make a formation in time. For some reason, on I still had a fudgesicle in my hand. I also happened to be eating the fudgesicle and walking at the same time, which is pretty much the most non-Marine thing a Marine can do. It was like painting a yellow target on my chest. About 100 yards away, I was spotted by our Gunnery Sergeant.

“Berardi, what the f*** is that? What the f*** are you doing?”

In a moment, my mind flashed back to the scene in *Apocalypse Now*, when Private Pyle was discovered with a jelly doughnut in the barracks, which then reminded me of that other time my drill instructors in Boot Camp found out that a recruit stole peanut butter

and jelly packets from the chow hall. That guy was “smoked” (assigned intense calisthenics) for days. Whatever was next wouldn’t be good.

The Platoon lined up into formation, with four ranks, about 40 men, standing at parade rest. Then the Gunny called everyone to attention as if something important was about to happen. “Atten-tion! Berardi, get over here, and bring your popsicle too!” he yelled.

I fired back, “Aye, Gunny!” I ran over to the Gunny. “Lance Corporal Berardi, reporting as ordered.”

“Since you think walking and eating was a good idea, we’d all like to see you finish it, go ahead finish your fudgesicle.” So, I continued to eat the popsicle.

“No, Berardi, I don’t want you to eat it, I want you to lick it...slowly.”

“Aye, Gunny,” I managed to say between licks of shame and embarrassment.

I looked forward at my two closest buddies, who bent over in laughter, trying their very best to hold it in their laughs, snorting out of their noses, tears in their eyes. As the Gunny proceeded to give the post-lunch orders for the day, I remained out front, at the position of attention, licking my popsicle. While this form of public humiliation is not typical in the Fleet Marine Force, it was the Gunny’s way of lightening the pre-deployment mood, flashing us all back to boot camp, and setting an example for others to follow. It was an understanding, and I was definitely in the wrong. Marines don’t eat, smoke, spit, drink, or have their hands in their pockets when walking.

To this day, my friends, and even their significant others, still remind me of the fudgesicle story. It’s one of my favorites, not only because it brings laughter to others, but also because it speaks volumes about how dearly the Marines adhere to their standards.

It's not just having excellent standards, it's about how seriously an organization takes them. What is and is not condoned in an environment creates norms. How strictly we adhere to and uphold our beliefs is what conditions the strength of our norms. This sustains a standard of excellence within a culture. For everyone else, there are plenty of popsicles.

From my interviews, there was a clear mentality that expressed the need for adherence to higher standards, an unwillingness to give way to lesser standards, and an insistence on prompt and direct confrontation when there is deviation from the expected standard.

Interview Support for Sustained Standards of Excellence

[With respect to hiring standards,] layering a vision, and hiring the right people who buy into the vision [is key]. I know they will be there through thick and thin. People of a high caliber are going to be able to attract a high caliber.

(Respondent 1)

Once you are part of a high performing team, you don't want to be part of a low performing team. Most people have never been part of it, and they are ok with it because they don't have the frame of reference. (Respondent 1)

Another Marine stated, "I demand high performance, but I'm also fair... I think it's just leading by example. It's the big thing. You lead by example and hold each other accountable." (Respondent 4)

Supporting Literature on Sustained Standards of Excellence

Carl Larson and Frank LaFasto (1989) conducted interviews with leaders on what they present as a "theoretically rich sample of teams" (p. 20). They identified having a standard of excellence as one of eight core characteristics of effective teams. Using grounded theory, the authors identified a sample of 30 divergent, yet effectively

functioning, teams, deemed “noteworthy” for their achievements. The second phase was narrowed to more specific types of teams, such as executive management and project teams. After phases one and two, the researchers noted identifiable and highly consistent properties of their samples. For the third phase of research, the “saturation” phase, the sample scope was widened to exhaust the “theoretical dimensions of the phenomenon being studied” (p. 23).

The teams studied included The Presidential Commission on the Space Shuttle Challenger Accident, the Notre Dame 1966 Championship Football Team, and the US Navy Strike Warfare Center. Pressure to achieve excellence is noted as a precursor for inquiry with regard to the definition of work quality outputs, and pressure will quickly help identify what success or failure looks like. The authors review from where pressure to meet excellent standards derived. The sources of pressure were identified as the individual (co-worker) having a standard of excellence, who can indirectly challenge others. The team is a source of pressure, understanding its own goals, which can be reflective of a standard of excellence, and will also identify the antithesis for excellence (failure), which in its own right is a consequence. External pressure (the system within which a group or team lives) is a source of pressure, and, lastly, the team leader is a source of pressure.

At its core, regardless of the source of pressure, the trickle-down effect ultimately impacts an individual and what is required of him or her to meet a standard of excellence (Larson and Lafasto, 1989). They place emphasis on the unremitting leader as a source of pressure that can elevate a team:

It’s the leader who is never quite satisfied with a good team performance, let alone the status quo. It is the leader who attempts to make current practices

obsolete before the competition – or worse yet, failure – does so first. It’s the leader who constantly pushes the team to overcome inertia through constant follow-up, never accepting excuses for lack of results, and creating consequences for failure and rewards for excellence (Larson and Lafasto, 1989, p. 100).

It seems that the most elite teams not only have leaders that demand accountability, but at the team level, individual members hold each other accountable to standards and values.

As the interviews progressed, there was a repetition of responses concerning the connection between competency and credibility as a leader. It surfaced several times among different respondents.

Competency

Knowledge attainment in the Marines means the difference between life and death. Consequently, the ability to react and respond to uniquely challenging situations is enhanced by having a foundational knowledge of *how* to adapt at the moment. This supports combat effectiveness. This is why every Marine, regardless of job title, is a Rifleman first.

In Boot Camp, the only quasi-relaxed time I remember was the weeks we spent at the rifle range. We ate better food, and our sleep was not interrupted, nor were we “smoked” (subjected to intense exercise) as often in “the pit,” a big sandbox. It sounds like fun, but it’s not, I promise. The sand fleas bite, everywhere, and temperatures in Parris Island, South Carolina, are nuclear. The focus during our time at the rifle range was learning the specifics of the esteemed Marine Combat Marksmanship Program. This is when a Marine becomes one with their weapon. The time invested was significant.

We spent hours covering multitudes of lessons including range, windage, trajectory, sight picture, sight alignment, and snapping in (hours of practice, aiming at small targets on a barrel). By the end, every recruit was firing an M-16 A2 with open iron sights (no scope), and hitting a human-sized target from 500 yards away. No matter what occupational specialty, Marines have always been revered as riflemen first. In the words of General John Pershing, U.S. Army, "The deadliest weapon in the world is a Marine and his rifle." A Marine's bond with his or her weapon can be understood through The Rifleman's Creed.

Figure 4. The Riflemans' Creed.

This is my rifle. There are many like it, but this one is mine.

My rifle is my best friend. It is my life. I must master it as I must master my life.

My rifle, without me, is useless. Without my rifle, I am useless. I must fire my rifle true. I must shoot straighter than my enemy, who is trying to kill me. I must shoot him before he shoots me. I will...

My rifle and myself know that what counts in this war is not the rounds we fire, the noise of our burst, nor the smoke we make. We know that it is the hits that count. We will hit...

My rifle is human, even as I because it is my life. Thus, I will learn it as a brother. I will learn its weaknesses, its strength, its parts, its accessories, its sights and its barrel. I will ever guard it against the ravages of weather and damage as I will ever guard my legs, my arms, my eyes and my heart against damage. I will keep my rifle clean and ready. We will become part of each other. We will...

Before God, I swear this creed. My rifle and myself are the defenders of my country. We are the masters of our enemy. We are the saviors of my life.

So be it, until victory is America's and there is no enemy, but peace!

Rupertus, W. (1942).

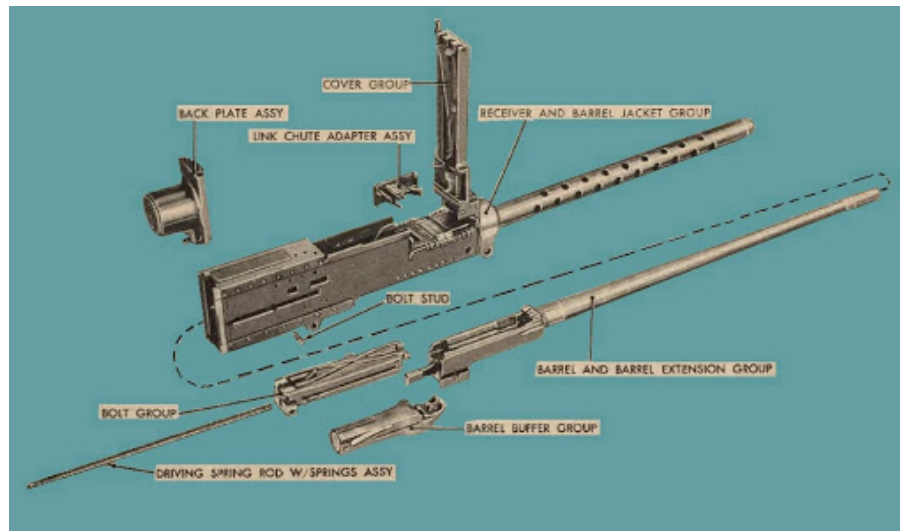
Figure 5. Marines Portrayed with their Weapons Through the Ages



https://www.bradfordexchange.com/products/922505_sempar-fi---history-of-the-marine-corps-cold-cast.html?cm_ver=GPS&cm_cat=Google%7CProductAds&cm_pla=185386024%7C88030348446&cm_ite=922505&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIInoDR4rfj6gIVzQiICR1ADQyMEAQYASABEgJ5GvD_BwE

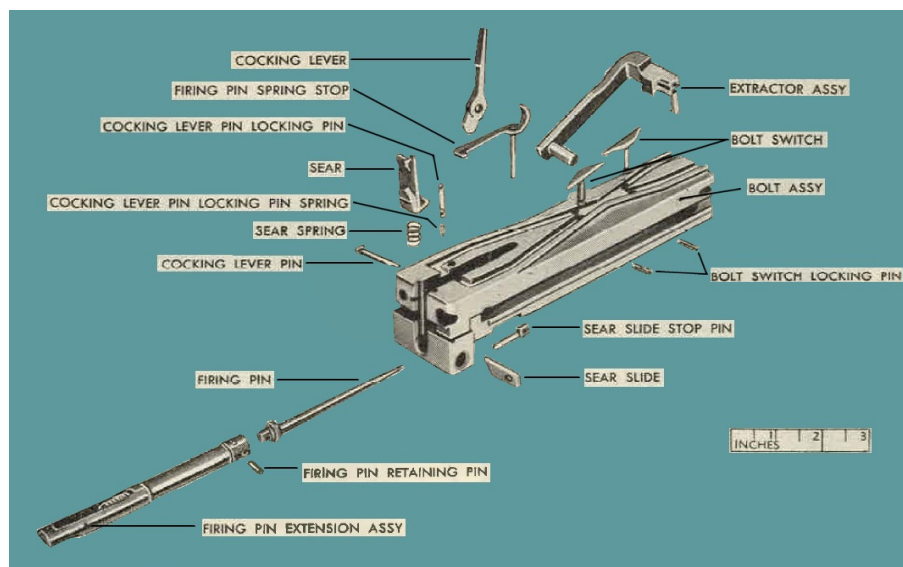
The Corps' insistence on competency continues throughout a Marine's career. Every Marine picks a Marine Occupational Specialty (MOS) to attend after boot camp. My selected MOS was 0331, or Marine Infantry Machine Gunner. There were three separate belt-fed weapons we learned how to use. We trained with the M240 Gulf medium machine gun (7.62 cal), the MK-19 automatic grenade launcher (40mm), and the M2HB Browning .50 cal heavy machine gun. In Marine Infantry School, as 0331s, we spent much of our initial training studying the nomenclature of the weapons systems. Below are examples of a similar weapon to the M2HB Browning .50 Caliber Machine Gun. The first image is the weapon itself without the tripod or traversing unit. The second image shows the parts that make up the bolt of the weapon. If any one of these parts is lost or put together incorrectly, the weapon instantly becomes a useless piece of metal.

Figure 6. Weapon System Nomenclature M3 .50 Cal



Note: Image taken from THE AMERICAN AN-M3 .50 CALIBER MACHINE GUN. (2020). Retrieved 25 May 2020, from <http://quanonline.com/training-manuals/fifty/index.html>

Figure 7. Bolt Nomenclature M3 .50 Cal



Note: Image taken from THE AMERICAN AN-M3 .50 CALIBER MACHINE GUN. (2020). Retrieved 25 May 2020, from <http://quanonline.com/training-manuals/fifty/index.html>

We studied the science of how the weapons function and the varieties of ammunition, such as armor piercing, incendiary, and so on. We had to understand the range of our weapons systems, the trajectory, windage, elevation, gas settings, cleaning procedures, and when to change the barrels to prevent overheating. We needed to know exactly how to draw a battlefield range card, usually on the back of a brown piece of cardboard from an MRE (meals ready to eat) box. A range card displays approach, interlocking fields of fire, a list of targets and range designations, and exact settings to zero in on selected targets, rapidly. Qualified 0331 Marines had the option to pursue Advanced Machine Gun School, where they had the opportunity to learn techniques like advanced land navigation, and defilade fire (using trajectory to eliminate enemy forces without being in the line of sight).

Figure 8. Marine Sighting Drawing a Range Card



Note: Drawing taken from Commands, M., & Wing, 4. (2020). Retrieved 25 May 2020, from <https://www.marforres.marines.mil/Major-Subordinate-Commands/4th-Marine-Aircraft-Wing/Photos/igphoto/209142/>

having a comprehensive understanding of the technical components, and role responsibilities to be an effective team. Every member of the team must know how to clear the weapon of any jams and perform remedial action for any weapon malfunctions. In the instance the gunner is injured or killed in combat, the others should be able to quickly switch positions and stay in the fight.

After demonstrating proficiency in all areas, we were then able to operate our crew-served weapons at the shooting range. In a combat environment, the importance of being technically proficient is not limited to a Marines singular job function, but it's also representative of accountability for the Marine next to them. The interview responses below reflect the same sentiment toward achieving competency.

Interview Support for Competency

As a Marine, I was never the one in charge, I was part of the team, now I build high performing teams within my companies. I'm responsible for that. I also know what it takes, it's about how proficient you need to be to operate at a high level. (Respondent 1)

Lead by example... having credibility... back in the day I could assemble and disassemble a machine gun just like you guys did, that gives me credibility. (Respondent 2)

Understanding everyone starts from the bottom and works their way up. If you have a leader that asks you to do things without having already done them, the team may second guess what they are talking about. Each rank understands what everyone else's job is. (Respondent 3)

I've been in each job, understand what is required, and understand moving up the chain. (Respondent 4)

Your team is already doing what they know needs to be done. Everyone knows their jobs, and they are passionate about what they are doing.

(Respondent 3)

Supporting Literature on Competency

While the Marine Corps does not interview and pick people like a corporation to ensure competency, it does have practices that create organic attrition from the very beginning of the enlistment process through to graduation. By enlisting, a person immediately subjects themselves to evaluations. The evaluations include the physical requirements, drug screenings, and background checks and include mental requirements by taking an Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB). Further, an enlistee is also bound to the Uniform Code of Military Justice, which includes consequences for underperformance of duties and disobedience. Consequences range from demotions in rank to dishonorable discharges from service. As for compensation, the Marines, like all other military branches, receive pay increases after achieving specific benchmarks to be considered for promotions. According to Larson and Lafasto (1989), there are two categories of competency, technical and personal. The authors explain the categories,

According to our interviewees, what matters most is selecting members who possess (1) the necessary technical skills and abilities to achieve the desired objective, and (2) the personal characteristics required to achieve excellence while working well with others... *Technical competencies* are the minimal requirement on any team. They refer to the substantive knowledge, skills, and abilities related to the team's objective. They are what a team member must know and be able to do well in order to have a reasonable chance of achieving the team's objectives... *Personal competencies* refer to the qualities, skills, and abilities necessary for the individual team members to

identify, address, and resolve issues. It is personal competencies that allow people to function as a team (pp. 62-63).

Competency is not only important to embody for members of the team, but also leaders of organizations must commit to seeking individuals that meet both technical and personal competency requirements of their organizations.

Throughout my interviews and experience, I found that competency is also supported by the leader. The leader's insistence on this development of others comes from having a sense of selflessness.

Care for Others

In combat and in training, the most important person is the Marine next to me. As a leader, it's my job to know exactly where my Marines' equipment is at all times. "My people, my gear, myself" is an old Marine adage. It's one that stuck with me through every role and team I've ever been a part of.

My people. when I served as a Machine Gun Team Leader, it was my responsibility to know serial numbers, counts, and be accountable for all of my Marine's gear at all times. This included, but was not limited to, night vision goggles, optics, ammo counts, rifles, pistols, bayonets, water, and MREs. This level of detail and care only sets a team up for success. It does not mean the individuals with the equipment are immune to accountability, in fact, it is the opposite. It's another layer of preparedness. It teaches norms to junior Marines, they see it, absorb it, and they emulate the behavior. It is what I learned from my team leader when I was in Iraq, and when I advanced beyond the position of ammo man, and gunner, I knew what to do, and how to behave as a gun team leader. If I take care of my people first and teach them, there is a significant return. This law of

servant leadership also transcends the NCO ranks. An example is when it's time to eat, Staff NCOs and senior ranking officers are the last in line to eat, while junior Marines eat first.

My gear. I still hear the echoes of many Corporals and Sergeants before me yelling, "Gear accountability, Marine!" I keep my gear in check, keep my pack organized, buttoned-down and straps tight. I must set a good example for my Marines, and hold them accountable for keeping their gear together and ensure they only bring what is necessary for the mission. If I tend to this, it creates trust and helps my Marines know I have their back. It's basic organizational support, and it prepares us for the worst. If shit hits the fan, we will need to move quickly, adjust, locate, close with, and destroy the enemy.

Myself. if my people and my gear are covered, I'll be covered. This loyalty and attention to the preparedness of the younger Marine next to me will change the outcome of a battle. I recall our Weapons Platoon Sergeant, Staff Sergeant Bartlett, who had spent his last few years of duty in our reserve unit. He had originally been part of 8th & I, created by Thomas Jefferson in 1801, at the beginning of the Tripolitan Wars. It is known as one of the oldest posts in the Marine Corps. Eighth & I serve as a security force and ceremonial component in Washington, D.C. It's one of the most disciplined and distinguished Marine units in the History of the Corps.

Staff Sergeant Bartlett was new to leading our weapons platoon. Still, he quickly rose in popularity and became a favored leader to our 40-man platoon. He was engaging, motivating, and far from adversarial. If I were to strip away his rank, as a leader, he leaned more in the direction of "older brother-like" as opposed to "in charge" of. Before we deployed to Iraq in 2003, I specifically remember Staff Sergeant Bartlett walking

down the hallway of our barracks and knocking on doors, one by one, asking Marines if there was any gear that they needed.

When he reached our room, he had asked “Berardi, do you need anything?” to which I replied, “Staff Sergeant, I could use some 550 cord” (paracord we use that has a minimum breaking point of 550 pounds). About 20-minutes after my request, *Poof!* the Staff Sergeant showed up at our hatch again. He quickly tossed each Marine what they asked for. One Marine received a new E-tool (entrenching tool, aka a shovel), another, a set of batteries for his night-vision goggles, and me, 550 Cord. We didn’t know where the gear came from, and we didn’t bother asking. In an instant, he was off to check on the other 35 Marines in his weapons platoon. Staff Sergeants were always curiously resourceful like that, they had access in a moment’s notice. Looking back, what was always in our control was having a sense of tactical preparedness, by having the equipment we needed. Staff Sergeant Bartlett knew that. He knew that before deployment to Iraq, it was of the utmost importance to make sure his Marines had the tools they needed to be successful. He knew that if we were not prepared before entering the theater of war, he wouldn’t be either. This type of selfless thinking, putting others before oneself is indispensable.

A feeling that emerges from this way of thinking is a sense of familial loyalty. It reminds me of parents and their will to do anything for their children, or brother’s love for his sibling. These guys are young, a lot of them are just out of high school. Some of them receive waivers to enlist when they are 17. They are someone’s child, and my brothers now. On my watch, they must be battle-ready. Understanding this fraternal order is understanding the fabric of the Marines.

Interview Support for Care for Others

The word selfless is defined as “having or showing great concern for other people and little or no concern for yourself” (Merriam-Webster, 2020). In the words of my respondents, the following represents their perspective on selfless service.

Putting the needs of the team above the individual... It starts with the leadership, if they are *selfless* and set a vision everyone buys into, and if they are highly proficient, they will attract that. (Respondent 1)

An example of this, in one of my companies, we were running out of funding, and I put my own money in to fund the company, when nobody else was willing to give us money. The team realizes the sacrifice, with no real guarantee of return. (Respondent 1)

The team needs to know that you have their back. A lot of times, I ask my employees to do more, and when I need them to do that there is a reason for that. In the Marine Corps, you at least try to fight for them. Getting to know your people, I've taken that from the military. I know their families, their friends, their kids. (Respondent 2)

Trust- you have to know that you have each other's back. I think in high performing teams that trust is there between team members. Going the same direction, believe in each other. (Respondent 2)

You also need to rely on your leaders to go to bat for you, you always had those guys to fight for what they think is not correct. (Respondent 3)

Supporting Literature on Care for Others

Katzenbach, J. R., & Smith, D. K. (2015) claim the distinction between commitment to one another is a distinguishing factor between the teams studied:

The true high-performance team, that--that is, one that outperforms all other like teams, and outperforms expectations given its composition is very rare. This is largely because a high degree of personal commitment to one another differentiates people on high performing teams to people on other teams. This kind of commitment cannot be managed, although it can be exploited and emulated to the great advantage of other teams and the broader organization (p. xvii).

Daniel Coyle (2018) interprets this as vulnerability, in an examination that includes the U.S. Navy Seals. He begins by asking the question, “Why do certain groups add up to be greater than the sum of their parts, while others add up to be less?” (p. 1). A key finding is one inherent attribute that contributes to high performance is shared vulnerability, as seen through the microcosm of team-based Seal training. Six-man teams are required to run 90-minute exercise evolutions with large 250-pound logs. To survive the exercises, the individuals must share their weight and move in a synchronized fashion. Individual team members quickly realize that if they begin to lag, it creates the consequence of more weight, to be carried for the rest of the team. Coyle (2018) describes the effectiveness of the training:

These two conditions combine to deliver a highly particular sensation: the point where vulnerability meets interconnection. You’re in immense pain, inches from your teammates, close enough to feel their breath on the back of your neck. When a teammate falters or makes a wrong move, you can feel it, and you know that you can feel it when you do the same. It adds up to a choice. You can focus on yourself, or you can focus on the team and task (p.121).

Throughout the exercise, the individual team members begin to understand their accountability to carry their weight to serve the greater good of the team. The more successful teams will move together in harmony and actually compensate for team members that fall out of coordination. They will allow for the team to recalibrate and maintain equilibrium. The author notes that a physically weaker team can be more successful than a stronger, more physically fit team, so long as they are operating in a synchronized fashion (Coyle, 2018).

Caring for others is not only beneficial when shared amongst a team, but also extends to leaders and the relationship they have with their organizations and mission.

Jim Collins (2009) uses extensive elimination criteria to identify highly successful Fortune 500-companies posting three times the market average return over 15 years. The original list of 1,435 companies was distilled down to 11 highly successful organizations. Collins uses the results of the research to identify what is required for an organization to pivot into a trajectory of greatness.

The distinguishing individual leadership characteristics identified amongst the leaders of the 11 great organizations were personal humility and professional will. This combination is what the author refers to as Level 5 Leadership. Humility meant that great leaders worked without ego, stayed determined to make others around them more successful, and credit others for their successes. Professional will was described as the leader's undying commitment to the greater cause. Collins (2009) describes this kind of inherent leadership tendency in Abraham Lincoln:

... (one of the few Level 5 presidents in the United States history), who never let his ego get in the way of his primary ambition for the larger cause of an enduring great nation. Yet those who mistook Mr. Lincoln's personal modesty, shy nature, and awkward manner as signs of weakness found themselves terribly mistaken, to the scale of 250,000 Confederate and 360,000 Union lives, including Lincoln's own (p. 22).

Fred E. Fiedler and Martin M. Chemers (1974), as cited in Larson and Lafasto (1989), call out the ego as a detractor to team success:

...it is the uncontrolled ego that can all too frequently get in the way of effective leadership. It can cause us to organize ourselves in convoluted configurations; venture into interesting business opportunities we have no business being in; hire people who should not be part of the team, and keep people who should be let go (p. 127-128).

Having a mission focus and placing emphasis on a commitment to the team above self, can help suppress the ego from getting in the way of team goals and

objectives. This focus on mission and objective, putting the team's needs above self, and avoidance of distraction may enable teams to focus, especially when the team may need to adapt to new challenges.

Adaptability

“Semper Gumby” is a play on the Marine Corps Motto, *Semper Fidelis*, meaning Always Faithful. The slightly sarcastic, but ultimately true parody definition means “Always Gumby” or “Be Flexible.” “Hurry up and wait” was a regular occurrence, and our movement depended upon a number of variables. I can't begin to count the number of instances our mission objectives, direction, distance, or route changed. We changed LZ's, drop points, and constantly shifted hours, or even days, of departure and arrival. Sometimes motor transport or choppers were delayed; we didn't always know why we just accepted it. We adjusted.

Sometimes, for fun, I would imagine the generals in a war room, full of cigar smoke and dim lights, observing a map of the battlefield landscape with positions of our forces. I saw them making critical decisions of battalion movements to seize control and overpower enemy forces. Then I would zoom out and back in on our position in a desert or forest somewhere, ready, as we awaited the next set of orders. The truth is that there are a lot of reasons why plans change, but having the understanding that change is constant, will enable adaptation and a sense of agility.

In the Marines, there was an understanding that we were part of a much larger and more complex system, dynamically changing by the minute. Our job was to await commands, welcome change, and be part of the action when it was our moment. Learning how to manage change became a way of life in the Marines. It started with Boot Camp

and carried on throughout my entire career. When a change took place, it had a simple response, “Semper Gumby Marine!” always flexible. Being resilient and adaptable in a constantly changing environment was a critical component of operating as a successful team. At the end of the day, how quickly we embrace change and adjust at the moment, has a direct correlation to increased odds of mission success.

Interview Support for Adaptability

I think if it is in the military, in the team, everybody is systematically working towards that same goal. They are all mission-focused, they know their roles, they are fluid. The team can *adjust to barriers that may not have been part of the plan*. The team can easily adjust to unforeseen circumstances. [Speaking about his current profession and role when things are going well,] when I think of my teachers, they know the mission, I’m a resource to remove barriers, funding, particular resources they need for their classroom. (Respondent 3)

Flexibility, Adaptability. Things change as I would imagine in a kitchen as well. Perseverance - you need this to complete a task and complete a mission. You have emotional highs and lows and pushing through those things. To know the end game, and knowing what is on the other side. There will be a lot of changes and persevering, and being flexible is what makes the team successful. (Respondent 4)

Supporting Literature on Adaptability

Elaine D. Pulakos, Sharon Arad, Michelle A. Donovan, and K.E. Plamandon (2000) conducted a study to understand adaptability in the workplace. The authors adopted a similar framework to John P. Campbell, Rodney A. McCloy, Scott Oppler, and Christopher E. Sager (1993), who developed an 8-dimension taxonomy of job performance by studying the latent structure of job performance. Pulakos et al. (2000) studied responses from workers in 24 different jobs, including service sector positions,

technical support, law enforcement, military, supervisory, and managerial, with at least 6 months of experience.

Each respondent offered between 12 to 20 incidents eliciting some form of response by them. Of the total 9462 incidents were retrieved, 1311 were qualified by five industrial-organizational psychologists as incidents for further review. To qualify, the incidents had to be “situations in which individuals modified their behavior to meet the demands of a new situation or event or a changed environment (p.615). The information was then used to identify dimensions of adaptability, of which there were a total of eight. The categories are as follows,

(a) handling emergencies or crisis situations, (b) handling work stress, (c) solving problems creatively, (d) dealing with uncertain and unpredictable work situations, (e) learning work tasks, technologies, and procedures, (f) demonstrating interpersonal adaptability, (g) demonstrating cultural adaptability, and (h) demonstrating physically oriented adaptability. (p. 616)

The three most common of the qualified adaptability incidents among the index of selected professions fell into dimensions of (c) solving problems creatively, (d) dealing with uncertain and unpredictable work situations, and (e), learning work tasks, technologies, and procedures. The researchers were able to use their findings to create a tool called a Job Adaptability Inventory, which was tested, reviewed, and later used as a way to measure a job’s adaptive performance requirements. One form of adaptability that stood out with respect to my experience in the military was physically oriented adaptability:

...this aspect of adaptive performance is becoming especially important within the military and related jobs. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the military's primary mission has changed from protecting against a single, well-defined enemy to protecting against more varied and ill-defined enemies (Edwards & Morrison, 1984). The missions being undertaken today






are unique and qualitatively different from those of the past because they involve small intervention units that perform a variety of operations in many different cultures and climates. Quickly adapting to the varied and challenging physical conditions as one moves from country to country and climate to climate is a key aspect of effective performance in these types of jobs (p. 614).

At an individual level, adaptability is a multidimensionally-measured performance attribute that may be useful depending upon the type of job. Additionally, speed to adapt (agility) is even more important in fast-paced and dynamically changing environments.

Chapter Summary

Through my own experiences, I've identified the following leadership tendencies that I believe exist in a military environment, (1) Indoctrination, (2) Attention to Detail, (3) Commitment to Standards of Excellence, (4) Technical Competency, (5) Care for Others and (6) Adaptability. I've provided a matrix with each category below that indicates the collection of dimensions that originated from both my own inductive world view and those of my military interview respondents, which have also been underpinned by organizational leadership literature.

Table 1. Leadership Theme Validation Framework

Tendencies	Military Leaders	Culinary Leaders
Indoctrination		
Commitment to Standards of Excellence		
Competency (Personal and Technical)		
Care for Others		
Adaptability		

CHAPTER 3

CULINARY THEME DISCOVERY

I return to my initial research question, “*Which high-performance leadership tendencies from the military exist in culinary environments?*” After reviewing the identified themes and the corresponding theoretical and anecdotal evidence, I reframe my question to, “*Of the validated high performing leadership themes of the military, which of these exist in leaders of culinary environments?*” In a similar fashion to Chapter 2: Inductive Theme Identification, the next section of this paper will identify which of these validated themes cross into the world of culinary leadership. First, however, let’s take a trip.

A Trip to Spain

It was a one Michelin starred kitchen in the south of Spain, a small Mediterranean town in Andalucia, called Malaga located on the strait of Gibraltar, close to Tangier, Morocco. Malaga has a strong Moorish influence, which surfaces in both the architecture and the food. The cuisine embeds cinnamon, nutmeg, saffron, cumin, cardamom, star anise, almonds, short-grain rice dishes, and oil frying techniques from the Maghreb region. This region is known for its rich food culture, including tapas, sweet sherry and Moscatel wines, lavender honey, goat cheese, serrano ham, churros with chocolate, and some of the freshest fish, crustaceans, and shellfish available. Some of my favorites include red shrimp, large razor clams, espetos de sardina (spit-roasted sardines).

I remember walking through a tunnel, away from the old part of town, passing by the Moorish ruins on my left, known as the Alcazaba. The harbor flowed on my right, the

intoxicating smell of orange flowers radiated the air, and the mid-morning sun bounced off the water like liquid gold as I made my descent to the Mediterranean Sea.

I passed the Plaza de Toros (bull stadium) on my left, right before arriving at the sunny, palm tree lined streets near the port of Malaga. I walked between buildings, on tile and mosaic lined streets, and up to the entrance of the restaurant, which I found to be locked. Not a great start to my first day. I found the side of the restaurant, where the kitchen door was open. I saw a dark-haired man, with brown eyes, in his mid 30's in front of the stove, stirring what looked like lentil soup. He looked up at me from the stove, and in Spanish yelled, "Hi, can I help you?" I tried my best to explain who I was. He smiled and extended his hand to greet me and introduced himself as Jose Carlos Garcia. He knew I was coming, and I felt welcome. At the time, Jose Carlos was the Executive Chef for a small family-owned restaurant called Cafe de Paris, a stone's throw from the Mediterranean Sea.

Cafe De Paris had one Michelin Star and a unique little kitchen. Ferrari red stoves with steel backsplashes, and dual planchas (flat top grill) for searing meat and fish, along with a convection oven that could regulate steam, and hold digital temperatures. There was lighting under the steel cabinets that gave the kitchen an almost lab-like quality. I saw several digital scales that measure down to the hundredth of a gram.

The pass is where the food is plated, where the artistry happens, where cooked meat and fish are gently laid, finished with sauces, vegetables, and intricate green garnishes, right before being swept away on hot plates straight to the diners. It is also where we would spend our family meal. Jose Carlos' mother cooked nearly every day for

the staff, and we would help her cook sides. Her piping hot arroz (rice) which was her version of arroz paella, was a cure even on the hardest work days.

Early on, when I didn't speak Spanish very well, it was embarrassing not understanding what everyone was discussing. I ate in silence, smiling and nodding when appropriate, but within three-month's time, I was speaking fluently at the lunch table. We had many meals on the pass, sometimes laughing, sometimes I received a Spanish lesson, or perhaps we tasted some new wines. Little by little, lunch by lunch, my Spanish competency improved.

There were only three chefs who ran the kitchen for the 40-seat restaurant, which is fairly modest. However, one diner can order as many as 13 intricate courses for their experience. Everyone spoke Spanish, and although they enjoyed trying out their English skills, they ensured that the kitchen spoke Spanish, or Castellano, 99% of the time.

It only took about three months before I could speak fluent Spanish, but in that time, I learned about the kitchen little by little, "poco a poco," as Chef Garcia would say. He would organically raise the bar and challenge me over time. At first, I was not permitted to touch anything, because Chef believed it was important for me to first watch how the food was prepared and presented (this is reminiscent of weapons training in the Marines).

I watched as the bright white rectangular plates came to life like a canvas, thinly traced circles, straight lines, and dots, drawn with a Picasso style, using a syrupy reduction of sweet Pedro Ximenez wine (sweet sherry). Some of the entrees were sous-vide meats like lamb, pork belly, or grouper, each of which left the pass with their own unique sauces, miniature squash, and carrots and garnishes like microgreens, agar vegetable cubes, and

thin crispy tuiles as garnish. It was all artwork that would be delightfully destroyed by indulgent diners.

My first job in the kitchen at Cafe De Paris, was to clean hundreds of baby shrimp with a toothpick, each prick aiding gradually deveining the tiny shrimp. After deveining, we would pound the shrimp out into a thin sheet, freeze, cut them with a circular cutter, and serve with avocado cream, toasted pine nuts, herbs, and sweet torrone. The task required diligence, discipline, and timeliness to keep the shrimp cold. The end product was a baby shrimp carpaccio. At first, the task seemed impossible, but with repetition, it became easier.

After mastering the art of cleaning countless tiny shrimp, I graduated to the daily preparation of the pave potatoes. Pave potatoes are traditionally French, but this version of the classic had a Spanish twist. Each baking potato was peeled and sliced paper-thin on a mandolin over a steel bowl then tossed in salt and liberal amounts of olive oil. As the potatoes soaked in the salt and olive oil, the moisture and starch would leech out, and exchange for the salt and rich olive oil flavor. The potatoes were then neatly layered in a rectangular dish, about four inches deep, and baked, similar to au gratin potatoes.

After baking, the potatoes were pressed, cooled, and then cut into squares or triangles which were gently crisped on the plancha (flat top) on all sides. Imagine biting into hash browns, with layers of crunchy, salty potato, laced with olive oil. These potatoes were served with nearly every single meat and fish dish as a side component. After I mastered the pave potatoes, I graduated poco a poco to a new task that required more skill and responsibility: cleaning fish.

Twice a week, there was a gentleman who would show up outside our kitchen door, with whichever fish the chef would order. In Europe, it's normal to have fish delivered with organs still intact. Chef Garcia, smiling, with eyes gleaming, handed me the fresh caught Grouper, also known as *mero* in Spanish. "Cris! Este pescado es para ti" meaning, "This fish is for you!" That fish probably weighed 30-40 lbs, with very large scales. It was a messy job, holding the fish by its tail and removing the scales over a large container, hoping to catch them all, sometimes hitting my face or jacket. I'd never scaled and cleaned a fish that big before. It's uncommon to butcher whole fish in U.S. restaurants, so the continued education was fantastic.

As days turned to weeks, I found myself continually challenged by Chef Garcia, assuming new responsibilities, and always first learning proper technique through a period of instruction. I understood the value of teaching someone, and the dividends it pays for both the organization and the individual. When another employee was sick for an extended period, I stepped into work at his station: appetizers, then pastries. I was back to revisit the shrimp that I was picking weeks ago, but this time preparing the plates. Not long after, I found myself on the meat station, where Chef Garcia worked. While he expedited orders, I worked at his station. I was honored to achieve and own the responsibility of crafting Michelin star entrees for Cafe De Paris. I gained confidence.

Toward the end of my apprenticeship, Chef Garcia trusted and encouraged me to experiment with my own ideas. Our final collaboration was an egg recipe that was a literal egg yolk, enveloped in a parmesan flavored "white" which was a mixture of parmesan broth and a hydrocolloid that solidified with heat when poached. It looked like a poached egg, but the white tasted like parmesan cheese. It was served over truffled

mushrooms, with brunoise breadcrumbs on top. Inventing that dish, alongside Chef Garcia, is one of my greatest triumphs. I don't know a lot of chef friends that put food on another chef's Michelin menu, so I had serious bragging rights.

My experience with Cafe de Paris was a life cycle of learning, knowing, mastering, then creating. It was only through the patience and time investment of a persevering teacher and mentor for which I owe my success and culinary style. Jose Carlos Garcia never gave anyone a plateau to walk on, but instead, a hill that would gradually become steeper, and more challenging until I found myself climbing mountains. To this day, I am grateful.

Figure 10. A Photo of me and Michelin Star Chef, Jose Carlos Garcia



Culinary Methodology

In this section, I outline examples from culinary literature alongside my own knowledge and then validate these findings with interviews from culinary leaders. I conducted six structured interviews with culinary leaders of high performing teams or organizations: a Michelin star chef/owner and operator, a Chef de Cuisine at a three

Michelin star restaurant, a former senior leader at several highly successful US-based dining franchises, a chef and VP of Culinary Operations at a highly successful and well-known grocery store chain, a VP of Operations and former District Manager at a large scale contract food services company, and a successful Chef/Owner of multiple units who is now an executive coach. I asked each subject the same questions posed to the military leaders (See Appendix A).

Each of the five leadership tendencies was supported by my research, (1) Indoctrination, (2) Commitment to Standards of Excellence, (3) Competency, (4) Care for Others and (5) Adaptability. Culinary writing is often highly anecdotal. I believe this research indicates a need for further study and could justify including kitchens alongside more corporate organizations in formal business studies.

Indoctrination

During my culinary interviews, I began to better understand the different dimensions of indoctrination: (1) environmental, (2) individual leader beliefs, and (3) organizational values. Similar to the military, there is a natural attrition that occurs through tests of aptitude, skill, and physical resilience, followed by indoctrination into values and beliefs of the organization. In elite culinary environments, the work is often regarded as a “labor of love.” The employees that venture into this environment have made a conscious decision to sacrifice their quality of life for their passion, and join the ranks of a high performing culinary team. Katharina Balazs (2001) explains the manifestation of this passion through the eyes of the Chef:

The chefs describe their daily activities as being characterized by a profound passion for what they are doing. In the pursuit of their “magnificent obsession,” they often forget that what they do is actually work. Loving what

they do, they tend to get immersed into a sense of “flow” that carries them forward without the feeling that they are extending much effort. (p. 138)

Elite culinary employees often work during holidays, nights, and weekends. The hours are long, the work is time-sensitive, stressful, and individuals are on their feet for the majority of the day. But even before someone is allowed to make these sacrifices (environmental indoctrination), there is oftentimes a test (organizational indoctrination). Many chefs conduct what are called stages. The purpose of a stage is for a chef to assess whether or not an individual has the skills, speed, adaptability, and perseverance to not only make it in the kitchen but carry out their vision. A stage can be as short as a day or as long as a few days. This time also offers the candidate to assess the environment and gauge whether it is a good fit.

In Michelin star restaurants, there are many individuals who travel to seek an apprenticeship, and knock on doors of elite restaurants, only to work for free for extended periods. Their goal is to learn from the greatest chefs in the world. Unless referred by another Chef, and they have extensive experience, these individuals start from the bottom: picking peas, peeling potatoes, scrubbing clams, washing dishes, all for free. Even with significant experience, and culinary education, I spent about a month picking tiny spines out of anchovies from the Cantabrian Sea at a Michelin restaurant in Northern Spain. Apprentice tasks are sometimes mundane, monotonous, and many individuals opt out, unwilling to do the grunt work; but for great kitchens, this is where it all starts. Those who persist are rewarded front row seats to see the greatest chefs in the world prepare the greatest dishes, and command the best kitchens. In doing so, they become steeped in values and part of the chef’s belief system.

During the six interviews, I uncovered several qualitative responses that pointed to the importance of adhering to a leader's personal belief system and insistence on staff sharing their organizational values. In smaller organizations, the leaders seemed to have more familial values and beliefs, and rituals, and a sense of co-authorship. In larger organizations, leaders seemed emphasized the importance of following the expressed purpose and vision of the organization.

Interview Support for Indoctrination

We believe in people working together for a common goal or mission.
(Respondent 2)

You need a vision that is [inspirational] - Your vision needs to be something that inspires everyone around you. I want to be a mirror to reflect everything positive. The vision needs to be HUGE! It needs to be felt, then embodied, then carried out. (Respondent 3)

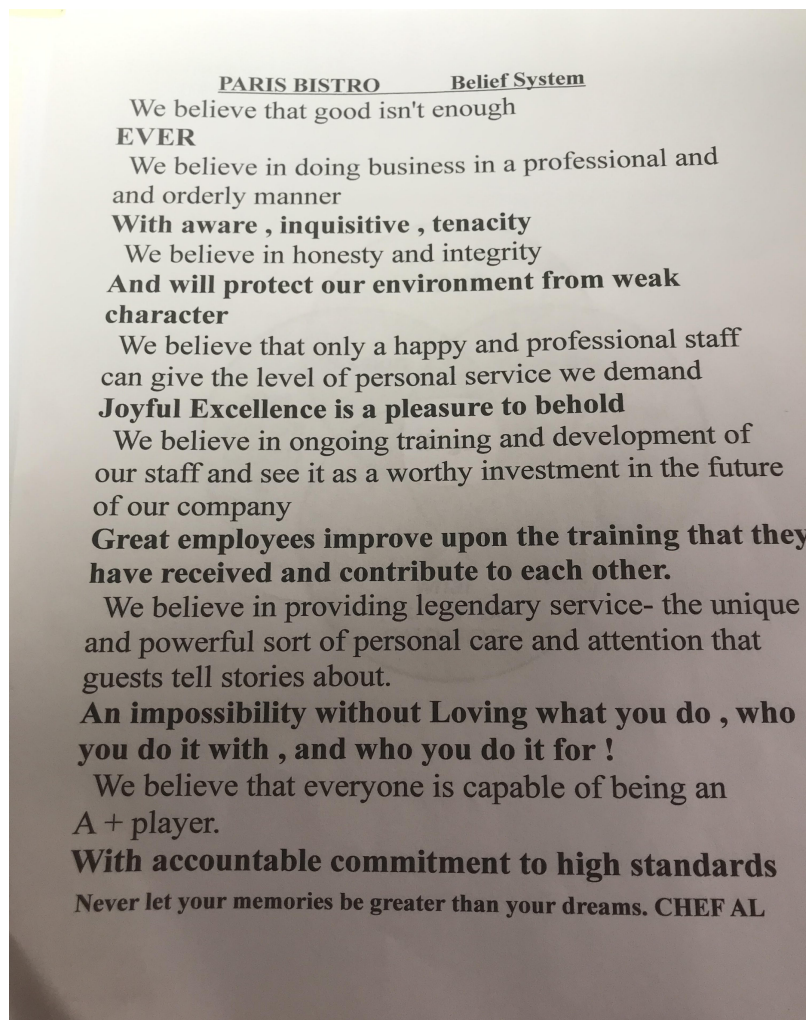
The funny thing about all tribes, all businesses, people don't have a narrative of their own. You need to create a narrative on what you are trying to achieve. Narrative = Vision. (Respondent 3)

It starts with purpose. An organization under everyone is there because they truly believe the purpose. Irrespective of tactical and consumer proposition, when they (people) understand and are brought into the purpose, an organization can do great things. (Respondent 4)

The restaurant is a family business. So, it is important to transfer it to the team, to make them feel part of the family, familial values. (Respondent 5)

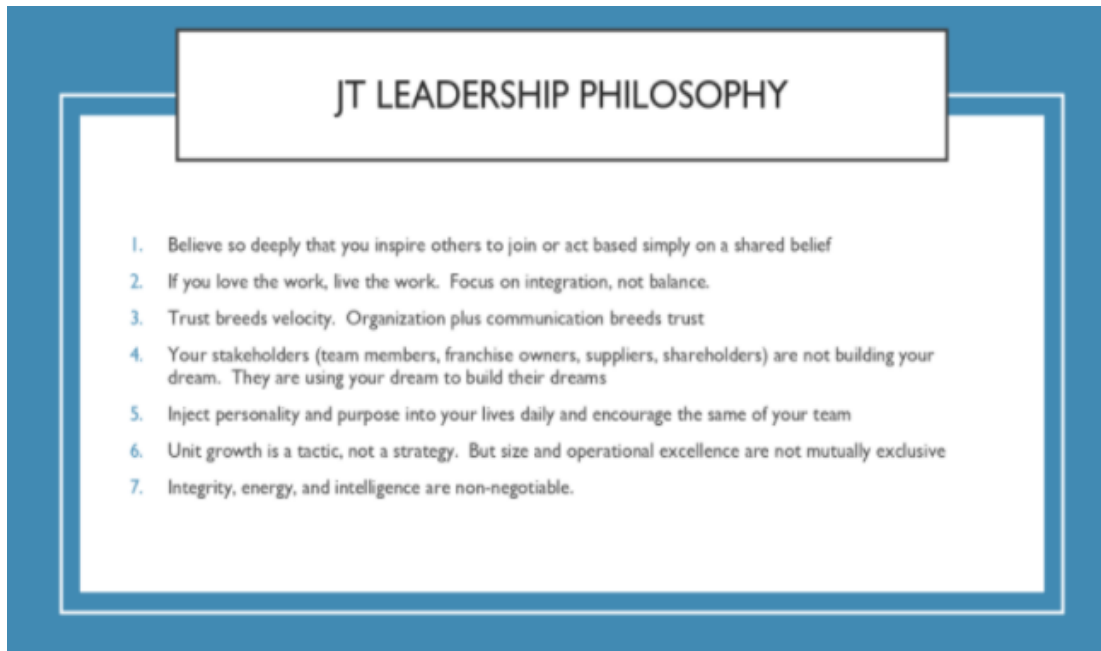
Two interviewees had their own written philosophies developed from their years of experience in the hospitality industry. Both documents express their deeply held belief systems.

Figure 11. Belief System for Paris Bistro



(Courtesy of Respondent 3)

Figure 12. Leadership Philosophy



(Courtesy of Respondent 4)

As part of the indoctrination process, the leader has a responsibility to emphasize holding the line concerning standards. In more elite culinary teams and successful organizations, the standards are a non-negotiable component of maintaining quality.

Sustained Standards of Excellence

Culinary leaders all have one problem in common. There is a pressure to have a team produce a tangible, consumable, edible, or drinkable item within a specified period, and thus meet a standard of quality that the chef determines. In Michelin kitchens, anything less than perfection is failure. The client expects this perfection, and the chef's Michelin stars are constantly on the line. To execute in a culinary environment at this

level, it is imperative that every team member be committed to the standards of excellence set forth by the chef.

In this kind of environment, the chef and his team are all adjudicators of food and product quality. The chefs use standardized recipes with documented technique, timing, and ingredients that have been tested. Punctuality, hygiene, organization, and cleanliness are all non-negotiable standards. In the best kitchens, there is cross-functional accountability to a clearly defined standard of excellence to maintain perfection at every single moment. This sense of ownership is infused into each member of the team, helping members hold each other accountable regardless of position.

Interview Support for Standards of Excellence

The interview respondents reverberated the accountability to standards of excellence. Two out of the six culinary interview respondents quoted below maintain at least one Michelin star.

We believe that everyone is capable of being an A+ player. With accountable commitment to high standards. (Respondent 3)

Coaches that hold players accountable make great teams, and players that hold players accountable make championship teams. (Respondent 1)

Setting the pace, I have pep in my step, and I expect others to emulate that.

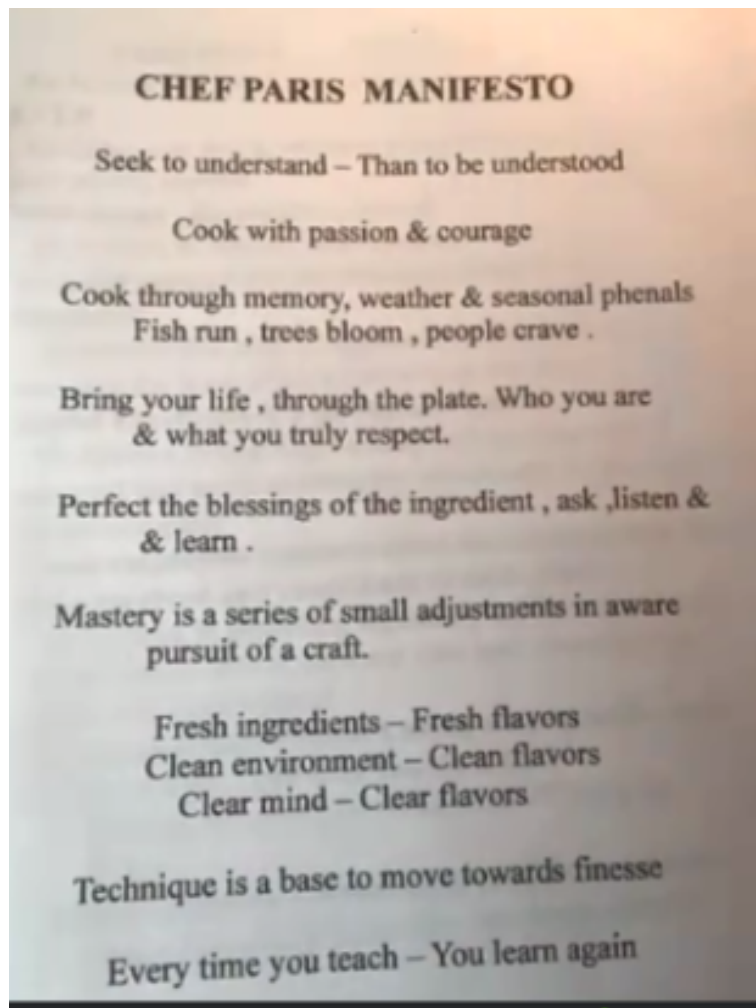
We have job aids for everything. When we open new stores, I follow them, I don't keep them in my head. You can't be inconsistent, and must be professional at all times, my mood does not change. (Respondent 1)

I think that the most important of fundamental values and standards is to have a very clear idea of the work... It is also important to have the vision

of what we want and be very clear about it. The team, the place, the client, the food is important, it is a sum of all these variables. Respondent 6)

There is a ritual that we do every day that is important: asking for an opinion. I decide on a dish but ask the chef and team what they think. (Respondent 6)

Figure 13. Leadership Manifesto - Paris Bistro



(Courtesy of Respondent 3)

Great chefs are not only committed to standards of excellence within the preparation of food but must also seek team members that have both technical and personal competency; otherwise, the standards cannot be met.

Competency

My parents met as students at The Culinary Institute of America and graduated together in 1978. My sister and I also graduated from the CIA. Like a teen going through different phases, I experimented with food in phases that galvanized my interest in cooking. Homemade pasta, baking, candy, and soups, were some of the phases I vividly recall. I remember pulling many books off the shelf in the kitchen and picking out recipes I wanted to make.

One of my most beloved cookbooks, which I open when I am searching for the “how” of any preparation is “La Technique” by Jaques Pepin, one of the most revered chefs of our time.. Inside the cover of the book, in my Dad’s writing, it says, “Gift from Joanne [my Mom], X-MAS 1979.” The book contains over 450 pages of black and white photos and instructions of French cooking fundamentals. Things like: How to fabricate lobster, how to tourne potatoes, how to poach eggs, truss and roast chickens, make custards, crusts, pretty much any classic preparation. In my opinion, it is culinary gold. Although they were fresh out of culinary training at the time, my Mom must have purchased the book for my Dad to have as a reference for his first chef position out of school. They knew the value of culinary knowledge and having technical competency. Inside, Pépin (1978) confirms the importance:

I have often noticed when speaking with people, or teaching a cooking class, that the greatest drawback to a good performance in the kitchen is inadequate knowledge of basic techniques. You may be extraordinarily

creative and imaginative in the kitchen, but you cannot take advantage of these qualities if you do not know the basics (p. 1).

This insistence on basics and competency of core fundamentals surfaced in a few other places. *The Professional Chef*, or “Pro Chef,” is the Culinary Institute of America’s foundational textbook, in its 9th edition. Paul Bocuse referred to it as “The Bible for all Chefs,” and Thomas Keller called it, “A serious reference for serious cooks.” When I was in culinary school at the CIA, we relied on *The Professional Chef* to write down recipes and methods on index cards for each and every class from beginning to end. The classes strictly focused on the culinary fundamentals: how to roast bones and make stocks, soups, sauces, and broths, how to fabricate and dice vegetables, and how to use the basic cooking methods, boiling, braising, steaming, searing, grilling roasting, frying, and poaching. Chefs and institutions view foundational knowledge as a springboard for young culinarians. The importance of fundamentals is evident in many other written accounts.

Julia Child wrote *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, which by many accounts is one of the most successful cookbooks, responsible for revolutionizing and advancing the American home cook’s approach to more technically challenging French classics. According to Judith Jones, the success of the book was its emphasis on fundamentals:

I’ve had the French cookbook for Americans for almost two month now, have read it through, tried innumerable recipes, some simple and some challenging, and I think it’s not only first-rate but unique. I don’t know of another book that succeeds so well in defining and translating for Americans the secrets of French cuisine. The reason? Because the authors emphasize technique -- not the number of recipes they can cram into a volume (Child, J., & Bertholle, L., 1983, Intro).

Balazs (2001) shares perspective from her interviews with over 20 Michelin ranked French chefs and their advice on learning technique:

Lesson 1: Turn life into a learning process. Learn the basics thoroughly, but don't get stuck in them; try to surpass them. A solid knowledge base in one's profession is a must. Even Picasso knew how to draw figuratively before he ventured into cubism. The most outstanding restaurant chefs have both a deep respect for traditions and basic knowledge, and a flexibility, openness, willingness and desire for constant learning and improvement (p. 138).

Great chefs often identify and seek this passion in their followers. The tendency of the great chefs is to hire the people that love what they are doing, and minimum, are curious, and wanting to learn. Pierre Kauffman, a three-Michelin star chef, observed Marco Pierre White's desire to develop his technical competency, "Marco only came to steal my recipes, but he's one of the best chefs I've ever had in my kitchen - always looking, always listening, wanting to absorb as much as possible as quickly as possible" (1990, p. 9). The culinary leaders that I interviewed also shared their insistence on competency development.

Interview Support for Competency

It is very important to be generous with knowledge, you have to teach and share as a leader. If the leader is not able to do it, then you cannot demand others to do it. (Respondent 2)

School is important. Every month someone from the team takes a course in something that excites them. They keep developing, keep motivated and keep growing. (Respondent 2)

When I see team members in a flow state, there is a sympatico that is working (flow state is a period of a high level of production and effectiveness). It's when a team or individual knows what they need to do and how to do it, they have the resources to do it, and do it well. (Respondent 3)

A belief in achieving personal competency is an important tendency among the elite culinary leaders. It also reflects an inherent belief in the power of teaching and an individual's drive for continuous improvement of self (personal competence). Great Chefs understand the importance of the relationship between teaching for competency (to those that are eager to learn) and execution of their vision. To invest in team members at this level is not only important for the success of the individual, it is good for the organization. Balazs (2001) alludes to the mentor-mentee relationships Michelin star chefs can have with their apprentices:

I have had many apprentices; many people have learned in my kitchen. They were screamed at when they did not do their best. But they love me. Still today, my old apprentices call me from all over the world and tell me how much they learned from me” (p. 146).

Much like the Marine drill instructors, this kind of “tough love” from chefs is a symptom of their relentless commitment to the standards that are set forth. Boundaries must also be set by the chef, as the emphasis on high standards also has the potential, when done to excess, to cross the line into hostile or abusive behavior. The emphasis on excellence must be driven by the chef's interest in developing the knowledge of others. It must come from a place of care.

Care for Others

Many young chefs-turned-visionaries express their gratitude for having worked under the lineage spectacular predecessors. A great example of this is Pierre Kauffman, who trained Marco Pierre White, who trained Gordon Ramsay. All have earned Michelin

stars. Senior chefs take pride in having trained the younger elite during their formative years. One of Balazs's (2001) Michelin respondents shared his perspective:

When people ask me what I would like to be known for, my answer is: for being somebody who has given, who has trained, who has taught. Most of all, I want to teach what I know. It is the privilege of age to train people (p. 146).

The care of a chef extends beyond their kitchen, as their main goal is to prepare the best cuisine possible in hopes they will impress and delight their guests. A direct example of this in the military realm is Marine and Army veteran cook, Floyd Lee. Chef Lee returned to the military from retirement in 2004 to take charge of the Pegasus Chow Hall during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Lee made it his culinary team's daily mission to enhance the standard ingredients provided from the Army, in an effort to give the soldiers, airmen, sailors, and Marines a series of meals to ease their worries. Lee's efforts were recorded in the article "A Culinary Oasis: How one man's enterprise makes the chow line a dining experience in Iraq" (2020):

Iraq can grind down even the most gung-ho soldier. The tours last mostly for a full year, the workweek is seven days long, and workdays can stretch to 18 hours or more. With regular rocket attacks on the base, every soldier faces perils. So sometimes all they have to look forward to is a meal. "They are in danger over here," says Lee. "But we've got to forget about it, at least for a little while. As I see it, I am not just in charge of food service; I am in charge of morale."

Under his direction, Lee's team would take extra care to do simple things like select the best-looking fruit for platters, marinate the Sunday prime rib an extra two days for maximum flavor, make banana pudding, assorted pies and cakes, and Texas sweet tea, all in an effort to boost troop morale. His leadership and insistence on serving those who

served set an example for his junior culinary members, and has been widely celebrated throughout the military. A similar sentiment of care for others as outlined in my interviews with culinary leaders.

Interview Support for Care for Others

Consistent, role model, be there for the people, and the people will be there for you. I've seen a lot of food come and go, but I've always kept in touch with the people that I've worked with. (Respondent 2)

I truly believe it's my overarching mission to help people perform at their highest level, and find their next gear, and help people understand what exactly they are capable of. That can be frustrating to some people, and that can be a filter for me. Everybody is capable of self-actualization. (Respondent 4)

Once a month, we go to breakfast at a restaurant. This month we are going to eat at "Aguas Vivas" Restaurant, grilled meat, Catalan stews, beer, a typical Catalan breakfast to be a family and not all work. Breakfasts help to integrate and unite more as a team. Breakfast helps create a more relaxed atmosphere, in which things are discussed in the restaurant that are not spoken and helps the team come together more. (Respondent 5)

Adaptability

Chefs not only have a sense of adaptability, but they also seek adaptability in their people. It's a survival requirement. Like the military, kitchen environments can be unpredictable and demanding. Food will burn, plates will be dropped, and fingers get cut, among many other things. There needs to be a solution at the moment: re-make the dish, clean up the mess, or tend to the injured, and keep moving. Service cannot stop. To smooth things over with the client, the chef may choose to collaborate with the maître d' and send the table of diners an amuse-bouche or intermezzo, "compliments of the chef." This buys time. Having the ability to navigate through a busy night, while maintaining a

sense of calm enables the kitchen to improvise and adapt quickly and accurately. Balazs (2001) recounts a Michelin chef's perspective, "The only real thing that I am looking for in my collaborators is the capacity to adapt to new situations" (p.143).

Chapter Summary

By laminating my culinary experiences over my military experience, I've been able to validate the following leadership tendencies in both environments, (1) Indoctrination, (2) Attention to Detail, (3) Commitment to Standards of Excellence, (4) Technical Competency, (5) Care for Others and (6) Adaptability. I've provided a matrix with each category below that indicates the collection of dimensions that originated from both my inductive world view and the views of my military and culinary respondents. In both sections, I've been able to support my argument with organizational leadership literature.

Table 2. Validated Military and Culinary Themes

Themes	My Suppositions	Military	Culinary
Indoctrination	✓	✓	✓
Commitment to Standards of Excellence	✓	✓	✓
Technical Competency	✓	✓	✓
Care for Others (Selflessness)	✓	✓	✓
Adaptability	✓	✓	✓

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The impetus for my capstone was the reverberations I felt throughout my post-military culinary career. It was not until I took DYNM 651, Group and Team Dynamics, in the Master of Science in Organizational Dynamics program at the University of Pennsylvania that I came to believe one's self and past experience can be effectively used as a diagnostic tool in the present. This realization helped me target points of interest and begin to hypothesize about significant points in my recollections of leadership examples. As an insider of both the military and culinary worlds, I've recognized that I've been able to effectively use my own experience as a way to diagnose my experience between two loosely related fields. What I thought was a beginner's mind in the culinary world, was actually superimposed with a military lens, designed to identify specific leadership tendencies throughout my own interactions and observations.

I found the research experience to be highly rewarding, and the exploratory process helped me pause my thinking at different points, get out of my own head, and focus on organizational leadership literature to begin validating my suppositions. The qualitative interviews worked to ground my research purpose with others' life experience. Using IPA (interpretive phenomenological analysis) methods as a research approach has not only opened new possibilities for further research design but has certainly become a new addition to my toolkit. The expansive process has enabled me to discover and synthesize the collective lifeworld experience between the participants, the literature, and me. I found the research to be useful not only to my own exploration of self, but also may be useful to junior kitchen leaders, senior organizational leaders, and veterans.

My Mental Model of an Organization

As I initiated my capstone, I reflected upon my culinary experience and the familiar feelings I had of being in a designated kitchen position, or station, being part of a greater whole that is designed to follow commands, and follow specific procedures, and recipes, to produce a final product to exact specifications. While I was researching culinary literature, I stumbled upon something else that may contribute to why kitchens might operate this way, and why my experience felt so familiar to the Military.

Using the lens of the BART system (Boundary, Authority, Role, Task) of group and organizational diagnosis, developed by Zachary Gabriel Green and René J. Molenkamp (2005), it's easy to see that the kitchen brigade system clearly focuses on role delineation, specific role tasks, independently functioning parts, and a hierarchical command/rank structure. Most professional kitchens run their operations and organizational structure using the culinary brigade system, which consists of hierarchical positions and their specific responsibilities. The system was originally implemented by Auguste Escoffier, the father of haute cuisine ². Escoffier was known to have worked for the military as an Army chief during the Franco Prussian war in 1870:

After the war, Escoffier re-organized his kitchen into a military-like brigade system, which is the basis of the kitchen hierarchy now established in modern restaurants. Cooks were assigned specific roles and locations and were headed by supervisors – the generals of the kitchen. They ensured every station was working in conjunction with each other. Terms we use today such as Chef de Cuisine [Head Chef], Sous-Chef [Deputy Chef], and Saucier [Sauce Chef] were pioneered by Escoffier under his kitchen brigade system (Larson, S., 2020).

It doesn't end there; there are dozens of other positions, such as Poissioner (Fish Chef),

Commis (Junior Chef), Patissier (Pastry), Boucher (Butcher), and more. So, the standardized system of most operations is a derivative of military structure.

Similar to the rank system of the military, most individuals start within the culinary brigade as a commis (cook), and work their way through the kitchen into more established stations, and eventually leadership roles. Kitchens typically produce a meal that must derive from multiple stations/constituents in a synchronized fashion (fish, meat, sauce, vegetables, starches). This requires communication and interdependency between station chefs to effectively orchestrate and sequence a dining experience, not unlike the coordinator required during a military campaign. It's quite interesting to think that the organizational structure for many culinary operations was born in a military environment.

As a senior leader in a hospitality-technology company, I find it useful to resort to this mental model to analyze our current state of organization. I look at the whole, the interdependency of parts, the business processes, communication flow, and how they work together to achieve our business goals. If this organizational model worked for me, I think other military veterans may find it beneficial to reference their own mental model of military organization when observing a new setting, to identify and interact with its foundational components and processes.

For the Novice

One of my original capstone goals was to identify ways in which a newly appointed kitchen leader could benefit from my research. Still, I would be remiss if I did not also include advice for the novice that is seeking his or her first kitchen experience.

If I had the opportunity to consult a younger newcomer to the culinary world, I would strongly advise them to first question their own determination, and ask, "Am I

truly passionate about this field?” If the answer is yes, then the long hours won’t feel long, the sore feet won’t feel as bad, the heat of the stove will welcome them, and the stern chef will become their mentor. In addition, having an eagerness to learn should supersede any other impulse.

When I was an apprentice in Spain, one of the most important archetypes I embodied in a Michelin setting was that of an obedient apprentice. My days were filled with various kitchen tasks but also curiosity. At night, I would read Spanish cookbooks on molecular gastronomy, and write down recipes and techniques to try when there was time. With that said, the novice has the responsibility to seek the best setting for training and ask the right questions from the outset. With the intention that my research benefits others, I have shared a Leadership BLT below, and an accompanying table below to outline the foundational leadership components a novice can look for. Each ingredient in the BLT represents a leadership tendency. Just like a great BLT, leadership excellence cannot be achieved without all of the necessary layers.

Figure 14. Leadership BLT

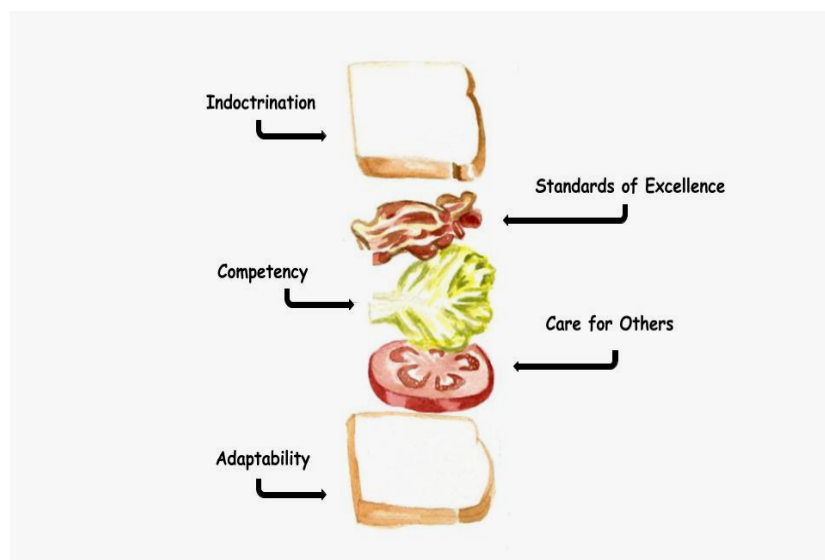


Table 3. Leadership Tendency Assessment

Leadership Tendencies	Check	Rate
Indoctrination - Is there a system by which employees are indoctrinated and aligned to specific values?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Sustained Standards of Excellence - Are there standards set forth that adequately express the expectations of the leader and organization? Are there sustainable systems in place that apply the necessary pressure to maintain the standards set forth.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Competency - Does the leader and organization have assessments in place to test for both personal and technical competency, create attrition and appropriate placement of individuals? Does leadership have a vested interest in the development of individuals?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Care for Others - Is there a sense of care and esprit de corps present between the individuals? How does it manifest?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Adaptability - Does the leader give me the impression that he/she is dynamic? If so, what systems are in place that encourage agile change?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Table 4. Self-Assessment

Self- Review of Leadership Tendencies	Check	Rate
Indoctrination - Do I have a system in place by which employees are indoctrinated and aligned to our specific values?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Sustained Standards of Excellence - Have I set forth standards that adequately express my expectation and that of the organization? Are there sustainable systems in place that apply the necessary pressure to maintain the standards and expectations set forth.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Competency - Do I have assessments in place to test for both personal and technical competency, create attrition and appropriate placement of individuals? Does leadership have a vested interest in the development of individuals?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Care for Others (Selflessness) - Is there a sense of care and esprit de corps present between the individuals. If not, how can this be incorporated?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Adaptability - Am I a dynamic leader, with the ability to accept change? If so, what systems have I put in place to encourage agile change amongst my team?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

For Senior Leaders

At the risk of generalizing, it's all too common to hear stories about dry and very surface-level practices of corporate orientations. It's clear to me that if a leader takes the

time to deeply engage an individual with the core beliefs, values, ethos of an organization, that the investment pays dividends. For senior leaders who may be in a position of influence in their organizations, I believe my research is a useful reminder to question whether employee indoctrination systems are deployed effectively.

James MacGregor Burns (1979) explains transformative leadership as being the ability to "engage each other to higher levels of motivation and morality" (p. 382).

Throughout my research, I was encouraged to hear the perspective of senior leaders and their emphasis on aligning individuals with core values, vision, and culture of their companies. The learnings reinforced for me how a leader's insistence on conducting organizational indoctrination can impact the transformative process of an individual. I was reminded that some of my most impactful and receptive moments, in any organization, were during my initial experiences.

At the time of indoctrination, there is also the opportunity to express standards and expectations. According to Larson and LaFasto (1989), there are multiple sources of pressure that can co-exist and sustain individuals achieving the standards of excellence set forth by the organization and leader. Standards may also be maintained by colleagues holding their teammates accountable, and there can be many more influencers in an organization that keep the culture and beliefs alive by leading from the middle. Those individuals that insist on adherence to the standards, regardless of seniority, are those that are well aligned with the vision of leadership. So, for a senior leader, it may be useful to ask, "How am I encouraging the sustainability of our standards?"

Care for Others (Selflessness)

In both culinary and military fields, team members and leaders are “in the trenches” with each other, both literally and figuratively. The investment leaders make into the well-being of others; their teams can impact outcomes. Caring is simply the commitment we have to the well-being of others. The Navy Seals build in training to create team interdependence. Consequently, the team gains the cognition to understand how their efforts can either help or hinder their teammates. Seals are trained to be selfless. Organizational leaders can be too.

A chef knows that younger cooks need the training to not only benefit their operation but also prepare the individual for a career in a challenging industry. Some culinary leaders emphasized this commitment to others as an impact on the trajectory of an individual’s life. This care for others transcends the physical business and boasts of the esprit de corps that is lively within the professional culinary world. The way we care for our colleagues and direct reports is an investment worth making. A primary example of that care is the technical development of others.

Development of Technical Competency

I was in Girona, a canal town in Catalonia reminiscent of Venice. Most days were soaked in sun, with a cool breeze passing through the canal, lined with multi-colored pastel buildings. This region of Spain houses some of the most incredible cheeses, hams, sausages, mushrooms, aintxos (small Tapas, or sandwiches “spiked”).

In addition to the pintxo culture, Girona is also home to a three Michelin star restaurant, El Celler de Can Roca, which placed number one on San Pellegrino’s World’s

50 best restaurants in 2013 and 2015, and either second or third 2011-2018. The restaurant is staffed primarily by apprentice labor, and I was fortunate enough to work there in 2009. I had the pleasure of working with all three Roca brothers: Joan, Jordi, and Josep.

A block up the hill was the original bar Can Roca, where all three brothers initially learned Catalan style cooking from their mother before attending further training. Every morning before we entered the kitchen, we could stop in for a *café con leche* and *pa amb tomàquet* (bread with tomato with olive oil). In the afternoon, Mrs. Roca would make a variety of Catalan style dishes, paella, fideos, fish, and pastries, for roughly 25 apprentices every single day. I've never felt more part of a big family, having a small bar to escape to, a place to spend time, rest my feet, and nourish with newfound friends from Italy, Argentina, France, Belgium, Brazil, Catalonia, Japan, and more.

In this environment, the standards were set in place, and nothing less than perfection was served. For a group of apprentices to achieve this level of perfection, they had to learn how perfection was created, and what it looked like. There was an intense focus on recipes and details. During my time, I worked at the pastry station, fish station, and meat station. At the pastry station, I tempered chocolate, made ganache for hand-dipped truffles, sprayed bonbons with cocoa butter and gold, pulled sugar, filled candies with chartreuse, and made ice cream, cucumber sorbet, and ganache. We also blew bubbles of isomalt sugar to make replicas of apricots (later to be filled with apricot mousse) and apples. For every one acceptable apple, we had about 15 bad apples. This insistence on perfection was a microcosm for my entire experience at El Celler de Can Roca. It was like a Willy Wonka Factory in the back prep kitchen, always a layer of

experimentation followed by a rigid system of execution of proven preparations and plate designs. Watching this dichotomy was an inspiring sight to behold, with Joan, Jordi, and Josep conceptualizing, trying, failing, and trying again until perfection was achieved, time and time again.

On the fish station, I cleaned and cut fish, shucked monstrous belon oysters from France, prepared sauces, and finished plates and garnishes for every customer on the tasting menu. At the meat station, I was taught how to butcher suckling pigs, duck, and goose. I was honored to contribute my newly learned skills to the famous dish “Goose a la Royale,” which was a timbale of goose forcemeat, served with a sweet and savory duet of foie gras and peach puree. It was my favorite dish to plate, and even more to eat! I was provided access to a dream kitchen, filled with state-of-the-art equipment: planchas, blast chillers, wood-burning ovens, thermal circulators, and heavy-duty, French-made saucepans. One of the more unique tools that existed was a glass tube with a bubble base, attached to a machine that heated and rotated automatically (Rotostream). This magical machine had the ability to distill just about anything into a clear liquid and use it as a fragrance for dishes. Rose petals were used to extract rose fragrance, and even dirt from a damp forest, was distilled to impart an “earth-like” aroma to certain dishes.

Everything we learned to make, or use, was first taught in the form of a demonstration of technique by a “Chef de Partie” (station chef). Everything was made using standardized recipes, followed with precision. When the preparation was complete, and stations were readied, dinner service began. It was a repetitive act of production perfection, and arguably the easiest part of the day. One expeditor would call verbal orders to the kitchen. At the same time, Jordi (in charge of pastry), and Joan (in charge of

savory) would watch patiently, and assist when needed, never intimidating, always observing, engaging and encouraging. The Roca brothers all had this peaceful way of being that was rooted in teaching, and inspiring others through the most magnificent food artistry and flavor I have ever been exposed to as a chef. There was an intense sense of familial loyalty and care for others. I was part of a system of apprentice chefs who, in exchange for knowledge, had a responsibility to maintain a clean chef jacket and apron, razor-sharp knives, a high speed of production, all the while maintaining perfection and artistry at El Celler de Can Roca.

To achieve perfection, consistency, and greatness, the leaders at El Celler de Can Roca do something very simple, but very hard. They fail repetitively to create something that tastes perfect enough to serve. Then they teach their secrets.

Figure 15. 3-Michelin Star Chef Joan Roca and me at El Celler de Can Roca (2008)



The Blend of Creativity and Discipline

There are certainly some distinctions to be made between the Chef and the Marine archetypes. Still, they are nearly identical in their embrace of discipline. In Chapter 2, I recounted how serious a chef was about making a Turkey BLT. In Chapter 3, a story about how serious a Marine Gunnery Sergeant can be about the code of conduct in the popsicle story. In both cases, the authority figures delivered a firm lesson about a seemingly less than serious topic.

Another parallel is the Marine's sense of gear accountability. I told the story of Staff Sergeant Bartlett ensuring his Marines have the equipment they need to conduct operations. The same accountability is essential to the Chef, who is the gatekeeper of all product, and kitchen tools for the team to utilize. It's when chefs begin to create that the paths diverge.

Something I implicitly represented in Chapter 3 was the unique ability Michelin chefs have to permeate their operations with creativity while also staying disciplined to achieve excellence and maintain their stars. In Michelin kitchens, the production of consistent appearance, flavors, timing and temperature of food is ultimately achieved through mechanistic processes and rigorous testing. But before the rigor, the chef always begins with a vision.

The artistic expression of a chef begins with what inspires the chef, followed by their urge to delight others by recreating the magical experience. Inspiration can be something as simple as a walk in the woods, where the majority of ingredients derive. Quique Dacosta, a Michelin star chef from Spain, brings vision to life in a dish he calls

“The Living Forest.” The dish looks exactly like a piece of earth teeming with mushrooms and growing vegetation.

Figure 16. Quique Dacosta’s “The Living Forest”



Note: <http://www.alifewortheating.com/posts/spain/quique-dacosta>

The memory of a trip to Cuba is represented below by the Roca Brothers. It consists of a lifelike, yet edible, chocolate cigar, filled with a frozen Cuban cigar-smoked ice cream, that can be dipped into a dessert rendition of a Mojito. This dish represents two of Cuba’s most sought-after delights.

Figure 17. Viaje a la Habana - (A trip to Havana) El Celler de Can Roca



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/ElCellerdeCanRoca/photos/pcb.10156437995274513/10156437995174513/>

A chef may even be inspired by food itself. Below is a blown sugar candy apricot, filled with apricot mousse.

Figure 18. Albaricoque (Apricot) - El Celler de Can Roca



Source: <https://www.pinterest.com.mx/pin/227572587398679703/>

There are many other means of inspiration a chef may come across, including visiting other chefs, referencing classic and contemporary cookbooks, attending wine tastings, viewing art, and recalling childhood food memories. The possibilities are endless. By the time an inspiration transcends from its infancy to a presentable dish, it has been blueprinted. To shift gears from inspiration to execution, a chef has no choice but to rely on organization, time management, and good process.

Chefs are known to move methodically from task to task, as they manage competing priorities under strict deadlines. They constantly monitor their perishable and non-perishable inventory and necessary production requirements. They inspect and taste every inbound ingredient. They understand the cost and yield of ingredients. They are responsible for procuring the appropriate quantity and type of food respective to the menu. Chefs keep their kitchen organized and clean by ensuring all sanitation requirements and

food storage practices are followed. They also schedule, train, and coach their employees. Lastly, Michelin chefs are well known for their strict enforcement of recipe preparation down to the last gram of an ingredient.

A chef knows they must strike a balance between addressing operational demands and allocating time for experimentation. This is how they stay ahead of the game and remain competitive yet unique to their own style. The pictures of their most artistic plates are the end result of a laborious process, oftentimes including hours of researching, testing, tasting, documenting, photographing, and throwing away many iterations. The process involves repetitive failure, and re-calibration of methods, and ingredient quantities. In my experience, the very best chefs work in collaboration with station leaders and apprentices to taste and exchange feedback and ideas for further improvement.

As a result of their pursuit of perfection, a recipe and method are born. The Chef's initial passion for creation invariably turns into a recipe that is followed to a tee, and a dish that will be executed flawlessly for service. Ultimately, the most intriguing part of the process is the Chef's ability to oscillate between inspiration, vision and tactics.

Closing

From the leadership tendencies I've outlined, (1) Indoctrination, (2) Standards of Excellence, (3) Competency Development, (4) Care for Others, and (5) Adaptability, I'd like to call attention to a connecting theme that stands out to me: The tendencies are largely geared toward the leader's conscious investment in the knowledge and wellbeing of team members.

In recalling lessons from my experiences in both the military and culinary environments, it's clear that the most successful leaders reserve the time to develop their

teams, and involve them in strategy. This practice of collaborative thinking and planning enhances the sense of inclusion and co-production. Moreover, these practices can have benefits that extend beyond the individual, by holistically benefiting the communication and productivity of an organization.

In the culinary world, a chef starts with a compelling vision, attempts different recipes, flavors, and methods, and implements rigid processes. Similarly, in a military organization, strategic planning is anchored to a desired mission outcome. In both spheres, there is rigor, determination, and collaboration. These components are a product of how serious an organization is about its values and commitment to its members. Why go through the motions, when they can simply be the best? This begs the question, “How can this be applied to other organizations?”

Looking forward, I would like to utilize what I’ve discovered during my capstone journey, and continue seeking roles where I can apply newly learned knowledge, and field test both of my newly crafted leadership assessment tools. In a similar fashion to the recipe development process, the outlined assessments would certainly undergo a series of tweaks and revisions as they evolve into a more formulaic process.

I’ve realized that I must also be selective of the organization, and seek leaders who have the motivation to succeed but have a desire to be the very best. They must have the same inherent selflessness, sense of esprit de corps, strong values, and explicit belief systems. The new vision I’ve set forth: To use my experience to help any leader or organization achieve excellence.

Figure 19. Military and Culinary



ENDNOTES

¹ The UCMJ (Uniform Code of Military Justice, is the Military Law System. The UCMJ defines the military justice system and lists criminal offenses under military law. *Source:* <https://www.military.com/join-armed-forces/the-uniform-code-of-military-justice-ucmj.html>

² Haute cuisine is defined as traditionally elaborate French cuisine ("Haute cuisine", 2020).

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What core values and standards do you believe contribute to having a high performing team?
2. When your team is at its best, what do you notice? What is your role when this is happening?
3. What organizational factors or conditions do you believe enable a high performing team to exist?
4. Are there any rituals or practices that you or your team take part in that you believe contribute to having a high performing team?
5. What qualities and or behaviors do you see in yourself as a leader of high performing teams?
6. What kind of leadership behaviors from others stands out to you?
7. How does your team resolve conflict?

APPENDIX B

MARINE HISTORY AND MYTHICAL FIGURES

Marines are also trained on the rich history of the Corps. Born on 10 November 1775, at Tun Tavern in Philadelphia, the Continental Marines were a Naval infantry force. First to fight, the Marines are proud to be a department of the Navy, and have since carried on as an expeditionary force in readiness. They learn about battles won and the great sacrifices made during some of the bloodiest fights, such as the Battle of Chosin Reservoir and the Battle of Iwo Jima.

Marine leaders educate younger Marines on the stories of mythical Marine leaders, known for their courage, leadership, and heroism. An example of this is the story of Lieutenant General Chesty Puller, the most decorated Marine in history. Chesty led Marines from the front in every armed conflict after World War I, through to the Korean War. Then there was Carlos Hathcock, a Marine sniper in Vietnam who had 93 confirmed kills. He later started the Marine Scout Sniper school, and heavily influenced the Marine Combat Marksmanship Program. Gunnery Sgt. John Basilone, a machine gunner, and the closest thing to a real life Rambo, was known for his actions while being pinned down during the battle of Guadalcanal in 1942.

Over the course of 3 days, he and his gun teams repelled multiple enemy waves from 3,000 Japanese soldiers, so many they had to remove piles of dead bodies in order to have a clear lane of fire. When one of his machine guns went down, he carried a new one to the team, killing enemies along the way using his Colt .45 handgun and a machete. During the fighting, Basilone had to carry a searing hot machine gun, burning his bare hands and arms while killing the enemy where he found them. Gunnery Sgt. Basilone and

two other Marines survived out of the original 15 in their company. He was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions. A few years later he gave his life on the first day of the Battle of Iwo Jima. He was 28 years old. (Simkins, 2020)

The Marines use symbolism to denote rank, such as the red stripes on their dress blue trousers, which are awarded when Lance Corporal (E-3) becomes a Corporal (E-4), signifying status as an NCO (Non-Commissioned officer). The blood stripes symbolize lives lost in the Battle of Chapultepec in 1847. The sword that is often seen and glamorized in TV commercials, is also a symbol of the Marines' actions and distinguished service record in Tripoli. The sword was a gift, given to Marine 1st Lieutenant Presley O'Bannon, and later inducted as part of the Marine NCO uniform. These symbols envelope Marines with constant reminders of where their "breed" came from, and how their values were forged.

APPENDIX C

MICHELIN STARS

Katharina Balazs describes the experience of eating in a three Michelin star restaurant:

A three-star restaurant experience is really extraordinary. Arriving guests are received with a warm welcome by a battery of people headed by the maitre d'hotel, and are led to their table. The serene environment that surrounds the customer strikes the perfect introductory note to the extraordinary dining experience. It provides as much pleasure to look at the decorations on the wall as it does to let one's eye wander over the beautifully set table, or the impeccably turned out waiters moving around elegantly. The atmosphere can be best described by Baudelaire's famous words: "luxe, calme, et volupte'" (luxury, calmness, and sensual delight). The service is flawless, the waiters utterly professional. When taking the order, they inquire if every dish on the menu is to the guest's liking. The client is king, and every whim is taken into account. Help is offered to non-French speakers, and professional assistance arrives in form of the sommelier to share the burden of selecting a wine. The wait for the food is cut short by the first arrival: a small appetizer that the French call amuse-bouche, literally translated "amuse-the-mouth," a small but intricate concoction of varying ingredients. This calms the pangs of a hungry stomach, and provides a hint of the symphony of tastes that is to follow. The food itself is extraordinary. Each dish is cooked to perfection, and is surrounded by the suitable sauce, decorated with leaves and flowers to please the eye, thus creating a plate of perfect harmony that satisfies more than one of the senses. The dishes arrive perfectly timed, neither too early, nor too late. Waiters are constantly surveying the room, always ready to appear at the slightest indication to satisfy whatever wish a guest may have. Glasses are filled as soon as they are partly empty, and from time to time the headwaiter comes to inquire if everything is to the guest's liking. The meal is flawless in every detail, up until the last small confectionaries that accompany the coffee. The exceptional food, the thorough and constant attention, the serene beauty of the surroundings, the discreet background music, everything in the restaurant is dedicated to making the guest feel well. After having paid the substantial bill, the client most often leaves the table with the satisfying feeling that he or she was completely pampered and has enjoyed a top experience, one of the best one can possibly have. With that comes the knowledge that this experience puts him or her into a small, select group of people who share a privilege that a substantial amount of the population can only dream about. (p.141)